



Helps to a Better
Christian Life



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HELPS TO A BETTER CHRISTIAN LIFE

New Readings for Lent



COMPILED BY THE
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THOMAS WHITTAKER
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PREFACE

THE growing usage of more frequent services during Lent has increased the demand for suitable readings. It is too much of a task for busy clergymen to prepare fresh sermons or lectures, however brief, day by day for all this period and so it may be helpful to have at hand a collection of suitable productions from other pens, which can be read for the instruction of the people who come to worship in the House of God in quiet Lenten hours. There should be no hesitation about substituting such readings for hastily prepared and insufficiently studied addresses. The reader can put his heart into the printed message if he will, and can make it his own message to his people by previous study and a word of explanation.

There are many collections of readings for Lent in print, but some of them are not as well suited now for their purpose as they were formerly.

Their style, their illustrations, their arguments and their appeals belong to past generations. The people of our day have grown accustomed to other ways of putting things.

One merit of the present compilation is that it contains the fresh and vigorous thoughts of men of our own time; with all their warm interest in the

life of our day. It is hoped that this volume may not only be a relief for busy clergymen, but that it may offer an unusually large amount of helpful and stimulating matter for the consideration of those who come to the Lenten services that they may be helped in their efforts to lead sober, righteous and godly lives.

The book will serve another purpose. Lent is the time for the home-reading of religious literature ; especially that kind which aims to quicken the spiritual life of the individual. It is believed that the selections contained in this volume will be found helpful in that way. The average layman, however eager he may be for religious instruction, no doubt often finds religious reading rather dull. This objection will probably not apply to this book, for, while the selections are all far from being commonplace, they are within the comprehension of any one who will read them thoughtfully, and they are certainly expressed in vigorous English.

While the book is especially suited for Lenten days it may be found useful at other times for home-reading and for those public occasions when a printed discourse must be used by the lay reader, or even by the clergyman, instead of original matter. In these cases the dates are to be disregarded, and the selections made by topics. Each selection is complete in itself, and may be read aloud in from ten to twelve minutes.

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Helps to a Better Christian Life.

ON KEEPING LENT.

KEEPING Lent is following a very old Christian usage, for a fasting period coming just before Easter can be traced back to the second century.

It is true that in the early times there were varying rules as to its length and how to keep it, but gradually large portions of the Church adopted the forty days period as we have it now. We get our name for the period from the Saxon. The word "Lent" means the lengthening time, when the days grow longer, that is, the spring. In ordinary usage Lent refers to the fasting period that comes before Easter. It is the Spring Fast. The first day is Ash Wednesday and the last day is Easter Even. The six Sundays between are not counted as fast days, for Sundays are always Festivals.

Omitting these you will see that it can be called "*The Forty Days of Lent*," while the Sundays are "*The Sundays in Lent*." It is the period that commemorates our Lord's stay of forty days in the wilderness where He fasted and was tempted.

It also commemorates all His sorrows, for He was a Man of Sorrows, but especially those bitter sufferings which came at the end of His earthly so-

journ, culminating in the agony of Gethsemane and the cross of Calvary.

Lent is a time for meditation, for special devotions, for withdrawal as much as possible from the world, for penitence and humiliation, and for self-denial. The great purpose has been to deepen the religious life, and so to become more like Christ.

So important is it to grow into the likeness of our Lord that men have urged most earnestly the keeping of this season with all devotion, as if it were our going into the wilderness to be alone with Christ. An old poet thinking of the blessed results of a well-kept Lent speaks of it as "the dear feast of Lent." The discipline is merged into the happy results of the discipline so that the well-used fast becomes the refreshing feast.

Says George Herbert :

"Welcome, dear feast of Lent. Who loves not thee
He loves not temperance or authority,
But is composed of passion.
Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
Is much more sure to meet with Him than one
That traveleth byways."

One very marked feature in the observance of this season is Fasting. We are bidden to fast, but fasting is not simply doing without food or exchanging one kind of food for another. Fasting, in a religious sense, means abstinence from our accustomed enjoyments and adding to the welfare of others. It requires us to live upon plainer food and to use a smaller quantity. It bids us give up

luxuries, and to turn away from entertainments and festivities, and to avoid sumptuous display in dress.

But turning from these is not an end in itself. There must be the turning toward something better, so that Lent must become a season of growth in religious knowledge and devotion, and in ability to bless others by the extension of goodness to them.

The Collect for the first Sunday in Lent carries the right view of abstinence. It is thus put into verse by T. W. Parsons :

“O Lord, who forty days, didst for our sake
And forty nights, nor bread nor wine partake,
Give us Thy grace such abstinence to use,
As may all superfluity refuse :
So that our flesh may lend the spirit space
To grow toward God, and with obedient pace
Follow Thy godly motions, and the will
Of righteousness and holiness fulfil.”

Years ago a favorite book among many people was “Nelson’s Companion to the Festivals and Fasts.”

It is almost forgotten now, but here is a quotation from it which is worth remembering.

“How should Christians spend their time during this season of Lent ?

“To express our sorrow for our transgressions we should practice the duties of abstinence and fasting according to the circumstances of our health and our outward condition in the world. Our external behavior should correspond with the humiliation and seriousness we now profess. Public assemblies for pleasure and diversion should therefore now be

avoided and the festivities of social intercourse in some degree abated. The public services of the Church should be regularly and reverently attended, and we should devote more than the usual portion of our time to religious retirement, to self-examination, penitence and prayer and to acts of charity and mercy."

Bishop Jeremy Taylor spoke of "the holy intervals when we are called off from the world to the acts and employments of religion, and when we are bidden to do honor to God and to think of heaven with hearty purpose and peremptory design." While we take care that "all the other portions of our time be hallowed with little retirements of our thoughts and short conversations with God, and all along be hallowed with pious intention," we may think of Lent as one of "the holy intervals."

How shall we make the best use of the holy interval of Lent? Said Bishop Huntington, "We need voluntary acts of self-denial whether to bring down and humble pride, to chasten fleshly propensities, to clear the soul for prayer, to provide larger charities for Christ's missions and His poor, or to honor God by a simple act of obedience to His word.

"How many need to lay a cross on their lips, to fast from strife and debate, from slander and idle words. Here are the ashes we are to sprinkle and the sackcloth we are to wear. Lent is for human kindnesses, neighborly sympathy, family tenderness. Learn in it to love the brotherhood and to visit the

poor. Hate nothing so much as hatred. Drop every grudge and revenge out of your heart. Live fairly with men. God makes the path of obedience to Himself to be the path of honesty and sweet temper and loving kindness to His children. The road of duty will still be narrow, but in it you will breathe the immortal air, and every deepening breath will be an inspiration of the life eternal."

I.

Ash Wednesday—The First Day of Lent.

The Message From the Wilderness.¹

“And He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan : and was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him.”
—ST. MARK i. 13.

OUR thoughts are turned to-day to our Master in the silence, the solitude and the trials of His forty days in the wilderness. His Lent was characterized by retirement, devotion and abstinence. Let us see what message may be thought of as coming to us to-day from that wilderness. When we think of Him who fasted and prayed and was tempted we know that the message first tells us of His being prepared there for His life's work and life's battle, of His gaining strength there from communion with God, and of His learning obedience there through painful discipline.

How do His retirement and devotion and abstinence appeal to us ? What message do these bring ? *First there is an appeal to us to find time to breathe a calmer atmosphere and draw nearer to the eternal verities.*

We all feel the pace at which we live. Energy in work, absorption in business, excitement in pleas-

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. John Ellerton, Rector of the Church at Barnes, England.

ure, activity in our very amusements: these are the conditions of our time. There are not a few, even here, to whom, were it not for Sunday, home would be but the place of the evening meal and the short night's rest. Leisure for thought, for books, for fireside communing, for the "children's hour," for such friendships as go deeper than the surface of society, it is hard, indeed, to find. At best, such leisure is taken almost by stealth from the time demanded ever more and more eagerly by the imperious calls of professional or commercial life. Household cares and duties must necessarily follow the same rule, and make it almost as hard for the mistress as for the master of a family to feel at leisure. In such a time as this, what becomes of self-recollec-
tion, of meditation, of devotion? What nourishment can be found for the inner life? What spare hour to trim the lamp of faith, or tighten the girdle of self-discipline? What place for the knowledge of ourselves and of God? We ought, indeed, jealously to guard the quiet of our Sundays from the encroachment of a restless age, which has fixed its covetous eye on the one day in seven as yet not quite invaded by labor. But just as you find that your physical frame requires the refreshment of your brief annual holiday, in addition to the Sunday rest, so, be assured, your inner life, your spiritual nature, craves likewise for a time of stillness and repose. *To some extent Lent may help to supply this want.* The quiet week-day service in church, the change in the character of your reading, the curtailment of amusements that there may

be more time for self-recollection and prayer ; the withdrawal from the usual round of social entertainments—not as a penance, not with ostentatious asceticism, but as a help toward living for a while in a stiller and calmer atmosphere, and there drawing nearer to the eternal realities—all these may help you somewhat, if you will, to mitigate the pressure which leaves your souls no time to breathe, and may strengthen you, as retirement strengthened your Master, to endure unshaken the countless trials of a very busy life.

Second, *the Message appeals to us for self-denial.* Christ in the wilderness witnesses to an age of self-indulgence.

I do not desire to exaggerate the evils of our time. In every generation the theme of the preacher has been the luxury, the extravagance, the license, the irreligion around him. In some respects we are better than our fathers. We have outgrown the unbridled insolence of the middle ages, the shameless coarseness of the eighteenth century. Yet surely no one can deny the enormous growth of a refined, wide-spread, complicated self-indulgence. It becomes a task of peculiar difficulty for modern Christians, especially those who have sufficient means for enjoyment, to keep up a high standard of simplicity and plainness in living ; and yet no denunciation or ridicule of modern luxury can be of the slightest avail in checking its growth without the influence of example. It is personal self-indulgence which lies at the root of domestic and social extravagance. Circumstances

change ; society becomes more or less favorable to purity and plainness of living ; but human nature is the same. In each one of us, now just as much as in St. Paul's day, there is a flesh which must be subdued to the spirit, a body which must be kept under and brought into subjection. For his own sake, no less than for the sake of others, a Christian in the midst of our modern society ought to consider it a bounden duty to cultivate habits of personal frugality and abstemiousness. A wise and temperate association of abstinence with devotion, at special times, both quickens the energy of prayer, and braces the will for self-discipline. Christ knew what He was doing when He went into the wilderness. We cannot doubt that He intended to fast ; that He deliberately coupled a season of special abstinence with a season of special prayer ; knowing that it was good for Himself and for a man that the two should at times go together. Not all the follies and mistakes, old and new, that have gathered round the observance of fasting days and seasons, ought to be allowed to blind us to this truth. Say what you please about old rules being obsolete, and modern observances fantastic or unreal, you cannot escape from recognizing the part which fasting played in the devotional life of Himself and His apostles. If it be true that such fasting as some church people now practice is not a very strong protest against universal self-indulgence, nor a very efficient help toward resisting its influence, still it is no less true that the duty lies at our door of making that protest more real. A continual ex-

ample of simplicity of life is better, no doubt, than an intermittent example of abstinence. And such a continual example each of us ought to try to set.

Third. But we have not fully learned the lesson of our Master's wilderness life unless we are persuaded that *the body must be subdued in special seasons of devotion*. If it is to be kept in subjection to the rule of the spirit in seasons of action or of recreation, it must be subdued in seasons of devotion. Rules are of man, for the particular time, for the local Church, for the individual. They are of the letter that may change; but principles are Divine, and permanent, and universal. And as we follow in thought our Master into the wilderness, if we seek for a detailed rule we shall find nothing, but if we try to grasp the principle on which He acted, we shall see that as lonely thought disciplines the mind for active exertion, and communion with God for communion with our neighbors, so the willing restraint of even the blameless appetites of our lower nature is a wise and useful help toward setting free the higher nature for closer intercourse with God and spiritual influence among men.

Thus then the message from the wilderness speaks to us of withdrawal from the rush of the world, of self-denial, and of the subduing of the body.

II.

Thursday—The Second Day of Lent.

True Repentance.¹

“I said I will confess my sins unto the Lord; and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.”—PSALM xxxii. 6.

WITHOUT True Repentance there is no pardon for sin. God is ready to forgive sin, but only on the condition that the sinner repent.

It is of the utmost importance, therefore, that we should know in what true repentance consists.

Contrition means sorrow for sin, confession means the acknowledgment of sin, and purpose of amendment means a firm resolve, with the assistance of God’s grace, never to fall again.

When we confess our sins we should do it with sorrow that we have been guilty and with a determination to amend our lives.

Sorrow for sin is different from remorse. The difference between remorse and contrition is this, remorse regards self, contrition looks to God. We feel remorse when we fear the consequences of sin, we feel contrition when we regret having offended God.

If we are to receive pardon for our many transgressions we must seek to obtain true contrition for

¹ Adapted from some sermons delivered by the Rev. S. Baring Gould, M. A., of England.

them. When a murderer has committed his crime, he fears, and is sorry, and haunted with terror. He wishes he had never committed the deed, because he fears the consequences ; that is remorse. So, in a smaller way, when you have done wrong you regret it, and wish you had been wiser, or less weak, and that what is done were undone, because of the consequences. That, again, is remorse, not contrition. God is not taken into account in that sorrow.

Try then, to realize what contrition really means. You can only attain to it by looking to God, and considering what He has done for you, and how ungrateful you have been. You sadly deceive yourself if you regard remorse as equivalent to contrition. There is nothing healing in remorse. The devils endure that, and are no better for it. St. Paul well describes the effects of true repentance. “Behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a goodly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what revenge.” (2 Cor. vii. 2.) Carefulness not again to enter into the temptation under which you fell, cleaning of the conscience by a good confession, indignation with yourself for your ingratitude, fear of your own weakness, lest you should suffer another fall, revenge—or punishment of yourself for the wrong done.

Having now considered Contrition or sorrow for sin, we may think of that *second element in Repentance* :—*A Purpose of Amendment.*

No man can fall into sin without the consent of his will, and no man can arise and shake off his guilt without an effort of his will. Sin goes through three stages. First comes the thought or suggestion of evil, and there is no sin to the conscience in hearing the suggestion, and having the thought. The second stage is the consenting of the will to the evil suggestion, and then, then sin begins to hatch. Lastly comes the evil act which is the accomplishment of the suggestion. Now there is so much evil in the world, and we cannot avoid the knowledge of it. We cannot escape the temptation of the devil, we cannot shut our ears to the suggestions of evil. But the thought and the suggestion do no harm, unless received and consented to. Just as the will converts the temptation into sin, so does the will convert sorrow for sin into resolution of amendment. If you would know whether your repentance has been sincere, find out if you have reached the firm resolve not to do that sin again. You must avoid the occasion which led you into wrong, and so you can show God that your profession of penitence is sincere. You will break away from whatever is sinful in your past, and you will seek to please God for all the future if your repentance is sincere.

And now we consider the third part of repentance which is the Confession of sin. When a child has done that which is wrong—you expect the child to come and say “Father, I have done that which you forbade me to do. I am sorry, and I will not do it again.” In that little sentence you have all the

elements of true Repentance. The child acknowledges its disobedience, exhibits sincere sorrow, and forms a resolution to be more careful for the future. We are God's children, He is our Heavenly Father, and He expects of us what we demand of our children. He requires of us sorrow for having offended Him, a determination to keep from sin for the future, and an acknowledgment of our transgression.

The great reason why God requires this acknowledgment from sinners is in order to bring them to a sense of their real condition. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

When the Lord Jesus was setting before His Church an example of the perfect restoration of a sinner, He spoke the parable of the Prodigal Son. Now this son had erred and strayed like a lost sheep. He had spent his father's goods in riotous living. At last he entered into himself, and considered how great his transgression was. Then he said, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Here you see his true repentance. He grieves over his transgressions, he feels his own unworthiness, he makes what reparation he can, by leaving his old life and returning to his father, and, not content with that, he makes formal confession to his father of his misdeeds.

As God called Adam to a formal act of confes-

sion, as the Prodigal Son is set before us as only obtaining pardon when he had confessed his sins, as David was called to confession as well as to sorrow and amendment of life—so is it still. God expects us to go down on our knees before Him and make a plain confession, an acknowledgment of our sins unto Him. God is calling us all to Repentance. We must not stop with merely thinking that we have done wrong, but we must be sincerely sorry for the sins of which we have been guilty. We must not regard it as inevitable that we give way to sin, nor put our hearts upon evil things. We should have a strong desire to amend our lives and to love that which will please God. We must tell Him so. Tell Him that we are sorry for the past and that we desire to live better lives in the future, and then seek His mercy and His grace in the name of the Great Sin Bearer.

III.

Friday—The Third Day of Lent.

The Use and Benefit of Fasting.¹

“The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast.”—ST. LUKE v. 35.

How shall I keep this Lenten season? How can I keep it in my circumstances, consistently with my line of daily duty? How should I keep it, so that the effect shall be most thorough in elevating and purifying my personal life and character? These are questions which we must take up at the outset, and a well-considered answer to which must lay the foundation for any real progress that we may hope for in the course of this solemn season.

Without attempting here to discuss specific plans, which must be determined by regard to each one's particular circumstances and personal needs, I desire to call your attention to one religious practice which stands out above all others as the duty of the season, and which the Church has unmistakably marked as such; but which is very apt, in our time, to be counted as altogether obsolete, and entirely disused, or else relegated to the observance of a mere sentimental piety. I mean the *Duty of Fasting*.

¹ From a sermon by the late Rev. Jas. Mulchahey, S. T. D., St. Paul's Chapel, Trinity Parish, New York.

It may be worth while for us to consider some of the reasons which have led good men and women in past ages to think that they were spiritually strengthened by physical, devotional fasting, and to ask if there is not something in these reasons to give them weight and profitable application in our own case ?

Let it be clearly noted that no one ever supposed that the mere act of abstaining from food was, in itself, a religious duty. *Abstinence of necessity* was always counted as simply starvation, as utterly devoid of religious effect or purpose as of physical comfort. So, fasting which consisted merely of such abstinence, has never been supposed to have the least spiritual efficacy. Really, to fast has always been held by religious teachers to be, like getting down on the knees, profitable and right if done in connection with prayer, and for intensifying earnestness and humility therein ; but, otherwise, of no religious character whatever. The question, then, is always to be considered with this understanding. Granting that sheer abstinence from food is not fasting religiously, why should fasting ever be considered a suitable accompaniment of prayer, or supposed to be conducive to its deeper earnestness or more fervent character ?

Now, in giving what I take to be the true answer to this question, let us begin by putting the matter on the lowest ground. I suppose that there is no one who is really in earnest in the spiritual life who will not admit his conscious *need of some test of his earnestness.*

The New Testament is full of passages which assert plainly and unequivocally that self-denial, in some form, is an essential element in the Christian life; and it is impossible to explain away these passages by referring them merely to the circumstantial conditions of that, or any other age of the past. They are, unquestionably, declarations for all time and applicable in every stage of civilization and to every person, of whatsoever rank or calling.

Now, this being true, it must be a question for anxious consideration with every one who is really conscientious, if there be any sort of test by which he can prove to himself that his religion is not a mere form or compliance with the conventional proprieties of respectable and well-behaved society. And, for this purpose, there is no test so practical as that which is afforded by every call of the Church to acts which are disagreeable and requiring self-denial.

Among methods of self-denial, there is no one that is so readily attainable and so generally possible as that of adopting some systematic plan, in which, from time to time and according to the recognized authority and wisdom of the Church, one puts himself upon fare that is less luxurious and abundant, less palatable and pleasing, and even harder and coarser, than his common regimen. *It is a form of self-denial which is possible for all, the rich and the poor alike; for luxury is relative, and the cheap indulgence of the very poorest has in it the same flavor of luxurious enjoyment that is found*

in the costly extravagance of the rich. Each must fast in the way which his own circumstances suggest; and the ways will indeed be widely different; but the self-denial, which is the essence of fasting, is as possible for the one as for the other.

But this is putting religious fasting only, as we have said, on the lowest ground. There is another reason for it, which is a little higher, viz: it is, at least when practiced systematically and in accordance with the regulations of the Church, *a testimony to the world of our Christian allegiance.*

If Christianity is to be a really effective power, moving on society and lifting it upward constantly toward a higher spiritual plane, it must be known and recognized as having a positive character; and its faithful disciples must have some distinguishing marks, by which they are known as "a separate and peculiar people," "in the world, but not of the world." But, open separation being now, as we have said, impracticable, and a separation by formal marks, as, for instance, by a particular style of dress or of speech, having been tried and found wanting, the true secret of such influence seems clearly to lie in a faithful conformity to the appointments and directions of the Church, which have borne the test of many ages, and been found, in the experience of millions of saintly men and women, to be most effectual in giving tone and character to the spiritual life.

The considerations that we have now taken into account would be applicable to any form of self-denial or self-discipline which might be sanctioned

by the Church ; but there is much more to be said, and more that is positively and distinctively Christian, in recommending the particular form of self-denial, which is, properly, fasting.

It is a fact, as remarkable as it is unquestionable, that, in all ages and under all dispensations, *they who have been eminent as saints of God have been known as serving Him “with prayer and fasting ;”* and this fact is alone sufficient to indicate that there must be apparent to persons who are really spiritually minded, some special fitness in this particular form of self-denial, as well as, in their experience, some proved use and efficacy for self-discipline and purification. Unquestionably, this is true. And the key to it may be found in the fact that in devotional abstinence from food there is *a special recognition of the original source of sin in the world.* Renovation, or even reformation, must begin with a humble recognition of its need in the fallen condition of our natural state and character ; and the same divine revelation which has brought us the knowledge of salvation, has taught us that sin came originally through yielding to fleshly appetite. What more obviously fit, then, whether it be in prostrate self-abasement, or for needful self-discipline, or as seeking for a personal participation in the counteracting efficacy of the divine redemption ; what, I ask, more obviously fit than *the religious-minded curbing of our fleshly appetite,* and our proved mastery over it by occasional denials of even its guiltless gratification ? This is, no doubt, the key to the general adoption of fasting

in the devotional habits of the most earnest and successful seekers after holiness.

Accordingly, in adopting this practice for ourselves, we have the advantage of knowing and feeling that we are in their company; our spirit is attuned in unison with theirs; we are consciously trying to be, and in our measure feel that we are, like minded with them, and we gain supplies of spiritual strength in this saintly communion.

Each one must determine for himself how, in his circumstances and for his individual needs, he can fast most profitably; whether it be by entire abstinence for the whole or a part of given days, or simply by cutting off indulgence in some particular for which he has a special liking. He who pronounced a blessing upon the gift of a cup of cold water to a disciple in His name, will also bless any act of sincere self-denial practiced in memory of Him. Only let us not mock God, let us deny ourselves in something which is to us really self-denial; let us, in whatever degree we may be able to bear it without diminishing our own usefulness by injuring our own health, put ourselves to some inconvenience, in sorrow and shame for those sins, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," which made our Saviour a man of sorrows, and exposed Him to shame.

IV.

Saturday—The Fourth Day of Lent.

The Temptation of Our Lord.¹

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil.”—
ST. MATT. iv. 1.

IN the Gospel which is read on the first Sunday in Lent there is an account of the fasting and the temptation of our Lord.

We do not know how many temptations there were, nor can we explain fully the nature and the circumstances of each. There are three temptations narrated:—First, that He should turn the stones into bread to relieve His hunger; Second, that He should cast Himself down from the temple; and Third, that He should worship the evil one.

Consider the reality of this struggle. The best expression to represent the attitude of our Lord to temptation is “He was able not to sin.” He stood out against it. He fought it. He conquered it. But the struggle was real. It cost Him self-denial and suffering. There must be conflict. Success could not be gained otherwise. Having become the partaker of our human nature, the lower was pitted against the higher, and there was antago-

¹ Adapted from some Lenten addresses delivered by the Rev. A. H. Browne, LL. D., Canon of the Cathedral of Newfoundland. Published by Longmans & Co. in “Wearied with the Burden.”

nism between the promptings of good and the promptings of evil. He suffered being tempted. The struggle was real.

1. *These recorded temptations may be regarded as types of those which may assail us so that they become warnings against self-indulgence, against presumption and against ambition.*

Thinking of His being unwilling to turn the stones into bread we must remember that His longing for food was at least as great as our longing might be after the strain of such a fast; and to this was superadded the knowledge, to which the devil so craftily appeals, that He is able at a word to turn the stones of the wilderness into the bread which He craves to satisfy His hunger. His fast, His overcoming of desire, even of natural desire, teach us to do battle in our own lives against the sin of self-indulgence.

It has been said with some satire, but with much truth, that we all worship a god whose name is "Comfort." And even religious people will find many excuses which (as they think) justify them in their objection to any forms of mortification and restraint.

But for our own souls' sake, let us war against self-indulgence. If there were no other reason for welcoming and keeping Lent, this, I think, would be sufficient—that, if we learn to give up this thing, however innocent, or to do without that thing, however well we can afford it, we are learning to keep our wayward wills in check, we are, by God's grace, trying to subdue the flesh to the spirit.

And, above all, the conquest of self brings us near to our Saviour. "Christ pleased not Himself." It is not the crucifix or the book of devotion in the oratory, that may most truly conform us to His image, but the daily, hourly sacrifice of self upon the secret altar of the soul.

2. Again we are permitted to see the conflict of our blessed Lord with the powers of evil; and this time *the temptation is to the sin of presumption*. To quote the words of Dr. Edersheim, "Jesus stands on the watch post of the temple, which the white-robed priest has just quitted. Fast the rosy morning light, deepening into crimson, and edged with gold, is spreading over the land. . . . The massive temple gates are slowly opening, and the blast of the priests' silver trumpets is summoning Israel to begin a new day of appearing before their Lord. Now then let Him descend, Heaven-borne into the midst of the priests and people. What shouts of acclamation would greet His appearance! What homage and worship would be His! . . . Jesus had overcome in the first temptation by simple, absolute trust. This was the time and this the place to act upon this trust, even as the very Scriptures warranted. But so to have done would have been not trust—far less the heroism of faith—but *presumption*."

It is presumption if we knowingly put ourselves in bodily or spiritual peril, trusting to the mercy and Providence of God. We recognize this, at least as a rule, with reference to our bodies; we say that no man is justified in neglecting the ordi-

nary laws of health, even in the interests of a good cause. Most people are quite ready to stay away from church if they are over-tired or if the weather is unusually bad! But do we apply the same principle to our spiritual life? “Lead us not into temptation”—but there are times when we almost seem to be glad to put ourselves in the way of being tempted, when we are ready to go into places and to undertake employments which are, to say the least, dangerous and full of peril to those who would live the guided life. And the result is that we fall. Satan has tempted us to be too rash—to be too presumptuous. We may not rely upon the Divine promises unless we keep the Divine commands.

Once more, that is terrible presumption which thinks that it may leave all that concerns the eternal world to the “evil days” of old age or to what is called a deathbed repentance. “To live ill, but to hope to die well,” is to tempt God.

And if, in God’s mercy, our souls have been saved from so terrible a danger as this, yet does not Lent remind us that there are many bad habits still unchecked, many good resolutions still unfilled, and that we have put off the “working out of our salvation” because we think that there is yet time; or, it may be, that we have some sin which we have never truly sought grace to conquer, because we have thought that it was but a little thing, and that God was very merciful?

3. Consider now the temptation to worship Satan. What is the sin which He resists, and by

His holy example teaches us to resist, when He refuses to commit even a momentary act of treachery to His Father by bowing down to Satan, although the prize might be all the fair kingdoms of the mighty world? *It is the sin of ambition.*

For what was He longing to do? Had He not come down from highest heaven to set up a kingdom of regenerated humanity? If the evil one yielded then would not all things be possible now—a world where all men shall love God, and shall acknowledge God as their King? Satan offers to yield all this at once. Yonder tramp of armed Rome, changed into the strength of men who use their strength for righteousness; that hungering cry of the old wisdom satisfied at last; those ships that dot the Mediterranean messengers of peace and love rather than of war or of selfishness: this old Jerusalem in very truest sense the city of God's peace. It is the appeal to the Messiah—to Him who thirsts for the souls of men—"all these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Is ambition always a fault? Surely not, we say. There may be a generous impulse toward excellence which dignifies and ennobles those who cherish it. Yet if we think of the word ambition in its original meaning as a going round about, a facing both ways to gain our end by any means, however unworthy—then we see that such ambition is indeed a very serious fault.

For ambition in this case means impatience with God's ordering of our lives. This is the form in

which it is presented to our blessed Saviour—He is asked to take into His own hands “the work which His Father has given Him to do.” And He sees that to do this is to worship another rather than God—“Him only shalt Thou serve.”

There is always some point to be yielded for any seeming advantage that the temptations of the world may offer us. Some of you know Edwin Long’s picture of “Diana or Christ.” Only a few grains of incense thrown on the altar-fires, and then life, love, riches! The alternative may not be put before *us* quite so openly or plainly; yet there it is:—“If Thou wilt fall down and worship me”—Give up something, the world says: It is nothing, it is of no consequence; if it *be* evil, do this little evil that so much good may come. Think how useful you may be in other ways, it urges, if you will only give up this one little prejudice that makes you so singular, and that keeps you from so much that you would like!

He who knows and who loves us appoints our path: “Order my steps in Thy word, and so shall no wickedness have dominion over me.”

V.

Second Week—Monday—The Fifth Day of Lent.

The Spiritual Life.¹

“God is a Spirit. . . .”—ST. JOHN iv. 24.

“There is a spirit in man.”—JOB xxxii. 8.

WHAT is spirituality of character? How are we to know it by sight? How may it be nourished? In answering these questions we are not left without guidance, and guidance we greatly need, for spirituality is a thing that has its counterfeits. The true *criteria* of the spiritual life are to be looked for in those passages of Holy Scripture in which the fruits of the Spirit are enumerated.

Let us consider for a few moments *what spirituality of character is not*. There are phases of character which sometimes pass for spirituality, but which do not really deserve that name, nay, more which serve to bring that name into disrespect.

1. Professing no interest in the affairs of this world, utter indifference to the great movements that are going on among men, the strifes of nations, the conflicts of Churches, the migrations of races, the growths of new modes of thought, the

¹ From a sermon by Rev. W. R. Huntington, D. D., Rector of Grace Church, New York. From “The Causes of the Soul” published by E. P. Dutton & Company, New York.

progress of learning, I say indifference to all these things is sometimes thought to be a sign of spirituality of character. I have known of religious persons who made it a point of conscience not to keep themselves informed upon the current affairs of the day, for fear of losing spirituality. But surely this is a misconception of the nature of the spiritual life. Fervency of spirit may consist with diligence in business, and if we do not see the two things frequently combined, that is not because they cannot be combined ; there is no necessary want of harmony between them. The depth of our interest in things unseen is not to be accurately gauged by our indifference to things seen.

2. Again, *spirituality of character does not consist in the habitual use of a stated religious vocabulary.* We are not to suppose that only those are truly spiritually minded who are accustomed to express themselves in a phraseology peculiar to this or that school of devotional thought. Spirituality is not a thing that can be tied to any one form of words or set of expressions.

3. Once more, *spirituality is not to be accurately measured by severity of disposition.* Sternness is not a necessary accompaniment of sanctity. It is, indeed, hard to associate boisterousness and joviality with the spiritual mind, but cheerfulness, surely, and a sunny temper are perfectly compatible with it. The distinctions of popular speech are seldom meaningless, and the fact that we have the two words, sanctity and sanctimony, would seem to be evidence that there is a difference between the

two things. Sanctimony is that aping of sanctity which counts upon a show of austerity to serve as the cloak of its disguise. Severity of disposition may be allied with profound spirituality, but we are not to suppose that it is essential to the being of it.

What then are the characteristics of the truly spiritual mind? If indifference to things outward and visible be no test, if the use of a special phraseology be no test, if severity of manner, the stern, unyielding temper be no test, where are we to look for *criteria*, how are we to distinguish between the true coin and the counterfeit ?

Suppose we make genuine spirituality to lie in *heartfelt reverence toward God, and consistent unselfishness in our dealings with our fellow-men.* By reverence toward God I mean that habitual sense of the near presence of the Father of spirits, which seems so to accompany some men as to throw a sort of atmosphere about them, the influence of which we feel the moment we enter it. There are precious stones, the amethyst is one, in which the coloring matter is so delicate that the most careful chemical analysis fails to ascertain either the quality or the quantity of it. And yet this subtle, impalpable something, by its presence there in the crystal, makes all the difference between worthlessness and worth. So it is with this characteristic we are talking about. We may not be able to say what it is about a reverential man that makes him seem to us to carry about with him the presence and something of the power of God ; it is not wholly in his

words, it is not wholly in his expression of countenance, it is not wholly in any one thing that he does; but somehow it is there, and we feel it. What is the secret of acquiring this unearthly power? It lies, so those who have the best right to say tell us, it lies in being much with God, in holding frequent communication with Him. We cannot be a great deal in the presence of a fellow-creature without catching unconsciously more or less of his "tone." Even so, to be often holding intercourse with Him who is a Spirit must impart to the spirit which is in man a something not its own.

We need in our religion more of this element of reverence. It cannot be that we should talk so flippantly as we are wont to do of the Most High God, it cannot be that we should use so lightly His name, His word, His worship, if we were, as we ought to be, alive to His presence, conscious of His continual judgment. We shall find, I think, if we study the characters of holy men, that whatever their differences of theological belief, they all possessed in common this intense consciousness of God's nearness, this habitual reverence for Him as a present Sovereign. If we would acquire spirituality it behooves us to remember to look up.

But not up, only, we must look around as well. God has knit us together in the fellowship of a common humanity, and to forget one another in our endeavors after spiritual achievement is hopelessly to defeat our own object. Hence I made unselfishness the second characteristic of the genuine

spirituality. It is easy to make a luxury of religion, to pursue it as a fine art, but to carry it into our homes, to make it serve us in the thousand and one vexations and temptations that spring out of our daily intercourse with the world is not so easy. But if we look carefully at that bright catalogue of graces in which St. Paul enumerates the fruits of the Spirit, we shall find that they are all of them reducible under the one common head of unselfishness.

It is by dint of the homely virtues, and through their patient exercise among inconspicuous scenes, that saintly lives are fashioned. God grant that before the end comes we may have acquired the spiritual mind.

VI.

Second Week—Tuesday—the Sixth Day of Lent.

We Find Ourselves in the Scriptures.¹

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.”—ROM. xv. 4.

THIS is a text which it is refreshing to recall whenever we have been harried by the worries of criticism, with the wrangles over Old Testament records. After all, let the dates and the authors be what and who they may, let the process by which the materials came together be long or short, simple or complicated, discoverable or undiscoverable, there at last the record stands, there at last the Book lies open before us, and the clear purpose which has brought it together is as manifest and certain as ever. *It is the record of the spiritual experiences of a race*, experiences unique and prolonged and manifold and momentous, experiences which embody and disclose the ways by which God has worked in the world, the methods by which He has drawn men near to Him, the discipline under which He has trained and purged and uplifted them. Through varied periods, under infinite variety of circumstance, still He pursued His design with them,

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. H. Scott Holland, Canon of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, England.

till they came to a clearer understanding of that mind. Over two thousand years of historical development carried on the continuous tale, and now, collected, sifted, amalgamated, there the entire story lies. Unknown hands, it is true, have worked at it, unremembered lives have uttered themselves through it, but all witness to the will, the character, the intention with which God Almighty deals with men's souls and bodies ; and since He is the Eternal God who changeth not, *it reveals for all time and to all people what is His perpetual mode of treatment, His rule of conduct, His moral characteristics, His Fatherly handling, His way of bringing out judgment into victory.* Therefore all these things are significant for us to-day, they reveal how that eternal God will prove Himself to be the same to us as to men of old time who served and trusted Him then. He never failed them, He will never fail us : that is the sure moral. These experiences of theirs "are written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." With that end in view, we see no critical questions intervene. Profoundly interesting as they are in themselves, they nevertheless leave us perfectly free to turn to the Old Testament with unshaken confidence that *we may learn from its comfort and its patience how to retain our hope.*

And our first instinct is perfectly natural and is right. It is to find in it the interpretation—God's own interpretation of our inner personal experiences. *We find ourselves everywhere in it ;* all is for us—all those old lives, lived so long ago, serve

to explain us to ourselves. They develop our instincts, they utter our aspirations. What we dumbly feel they express, what bewilders us becomes clear to them. They repeat our fears, our lapses, our falls, our recoveries ; they rehearse our panic, and our penitence, and our praises. It is self-revelation ; every hidden secret of our being is dragged up there into the daylight. No book ever showed us like this Book what we are, what it is in us to be, the height of holiness to which we might be drawn, the depth of shame into which we are ever prone to fall. We start as we read like guilty things surprised. Who would have dreamed that we were seen through and through by eyes that pierce the quick ? Here it all is, my sin, my disgrace, my self-deceit, my stupid, stubborn rebellion, Who has told of me ? And the Voice also of God which assisted me, and convinced me, and converted me, and broke me, the Voice that suddenly drove it upon my soul, "Thou art the man"—how did that strange Book ever hear of it and write it down—my own private secret of secrets, which I could not bear to tell to my dearest friend ! And the long-suffering mercies of my God, and the boon of His pardon, and the longings that I have had to stand before Him forgiven, white as snow, longings that have been in me just when people would have least believed it, just at hours when it would have sounded most incredible ! Here they all are, and other men have known them all, and have carried them further, and have gone lower than I, and have mounted far higher. I miss nothing here of all that I have ever

felt. So the Book draws me, so it persuades me. *All is written for my learning of myself*; that is the first evidence to me of its inspiration. God takes me by the hand and leads me along the whole story from end to end. He is a living God who knows me utterly as I am, forever His finger points from page to page, and ever as He points we hear a voice saying, "Is it not true, true of you?" as of him or of her of whom it was told, "Thou art the man; here is thy sin, and here is the way out of thy sin." Look and read, and mark, and learn! It is the story of thine own soul and I, thy God, am the same yesterday, to-day and forever: as I was with them of old, so also I will be with thee.

Take the Book, and so read it with God at our side, and its truth smites in upon us. From end to end you can verify it all. There is Eve in the garden, the most wonderful, the most unanswerable chapter ever written. Till the crack of doom that record will hold its own. Every soul that has ever sinned will put its seal to it that that is true; that is the precise way in which sin comes about. Its entire secret has been read; it is stripped of all disguise; in all its infinite varieties it does but repeat that one immutable type, it does but reiterate the old, old story by which innocence first passed into guilt, the serpent in the grass, and the creeping whisper coming we know not whence, and the dreamy pause that lingers over the thing forbidden, and the momentary indecision, and the subtle question that remains unanswered—though enough that it should be asked, it needs no answer

—“Hath God said ?” and the absurd smallness of the immediate provocation and yet the immense issue involved ; merely fruit on a tree and all knowledge of good and evil to be gained, and the sudden lapse of the will, and the hand that has been put out all but unconsciously, and the mouth that has eaten before it is aware, and the quiet that follows the act as if nothing had happened at all.

And then the sudden reverse, and the lighting of judgment, and the rush of shame, and the abject confession, and the irrevocable doom ! Who has not known it all ? It is I who feel God draw nearer in the cool of the evening ; it is I who fly to hide myself behind the trees of the Garden, my own heart that is laid bare as with a knife !

All these things were written, surely, for our learning. One after another they speak to me. I am a child of faithful Abraham, a child of the Promise, justified by faith, and a strange impulse discovers me as I live and move among my fellows, as it found him hidden in Ur of the Chaldees, and from that hour old habitual ways cease to satisfy, and a dim want sends me out seeking, and slowly this is met by a Voice that calls me by my name, and I move under covenanted guidance, and a mysterious intimacy goes forward—God is my friend, and visions greet me by the way, and then long, dull lapses recur, and again the call is given, and I rise and receive the pledge, and at Bethel I set up a stone, and at Mamre I am brought face to face with my God. And now again I look up, and at my tent-door the angels stand, and I run and bow

myself to the ground, and the incredible vow is made. And if I stagger not, if I cling to that deathless hope when God seems to shatter His own Word and to recall the promise He had sworn to make good, if I still go on and ask nothing, and only believe, some angel will intervene, and at the last moment God will find Himself a way ; still my faith, though it blunder, will be counted unto me for righteousness.

And Jacob in his lying, in his fear, in his flight, in his sudden insight, in his gradual purification, in his final wrestle—surely it is my own mean worldliness, my own self-seeking in all spiritual things that is laid bare. I know it—that selfishness in things of God, that snatching at my own spiritual advantage ; I know it all—that long fight with the mean, low-minded motive, the fight that must come at last, so fierce a fight, of which, even if by God's mercy I prevail, I bear the scar until I die. And Esau—the headstrong heedlessness of a loose youth, heady, wilful, unprofitable, unstable as water that cannot excel. Or Joseph, the man with the irresistible force and capacity of goodness that can turn all misfortune to good—how potent and personal is the story. If only I could trust in sheer goodness of heart as he ! And David, the strong, radiant, beautiful soul, so pathetic in his passionate love, so deeply stained, yet so utterly true at the heart of his manhood. And Solomon, with the golden promise of glorious gifts on whom the world's breath falls, and the fine gold becomes dim, and the touch of degradation soils and spoils—all written

for my learning ! And all the crowding cries of the Psalmist, voices of anxiety, of pain, of relief, of loyalty, of courage, and disgrace, and forgiveness, sent up out of unremembered perils and forgotten sorrows, from wild hills of Moreb and waste places in the wilderness and the Jordan, from dreary exiles under the willows of Babylon, the sighs of those who find no comfort ! Or again, the cries of the redeemed, and of those who know of Zion, and tell her towers and mark her palaces—all ours, our secrets that are read, our thirsting souls that drink, our hunger, and needs, and appeals, and complaints, and passions, and prayers, and hopes, and fears, and temptations, and exultations, all recognized and sanctioned and interpreted ! It is as if tongues of fire sat on every head. So our whole being is made alive with speech, we all become one cry; every feeling and impulse allowed for and understood, even as by penitence all of every race, whether Parthians, Medes, or dwellers in Mesopotamia, Greeks and Ethiopians, each hears in his own tongue the marvelous works of God. *That is the primary use of the Bible as it first takes hold of us.* And so far our task, our duty, is quite simple: it is to surrender to its influence, to learn its great language, to take its words upon our lips, to form our lives to its long and varied utterance, to follow its counsels, to absorb its temper, to identify ourselves with its records, to acquire its confidence, to walk in its faith in all dark days when we can see no light.

VII.

Second Week—Wednesday—the Seventh day of Lent.

We find Christ in the Scriptures.¹

“ For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”—ROM. xv. 4.

THE Bible is not only a bead-roll of faith, not only a record of heroic testimony, a treasury of splendid experience, but *it is also a unity, a single Book, a single, supreme, consistent, continuous action.* From end to end it says one thing and one only; it recalls one single event! What is that? We know it well! By St. Paul’s own special title it is called the mystery, the open secret, the divine act of revelation, the thing that God was always doing under cover as hidden leaven, yet preparing to be disclosed—the thing that was prepared from the foundation of the world, and that was at last done at the one fit moment, at the time and at the spot made ready according to the end decreed—the Mystery: Jesus Christ, the Hope of Glory. *From cover to cover the Book is full of Him and of Him only, one mind felt in it everywhere, one spirit quickening it, one Face looking out.* He weeps

¹ From a sermon by Rev. H. Scott Holland, Canon of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, England.

with all who weep, He suffers with all who suffer, He rejoices with all who rejoice. He it is who determines the shape of the entire material ; toward Him it is directed ; for His purposes it is distributed ; by relation to His arrival, its relative importance is to be estimated ; He is the standard of its worth throughout ; He is the sole measure of its truth. He gives to the whole varied mass, coherence and growth and vitality. Without Him it would have no principle to combine its details, to fertilize them, to transmute them. In Him they stand together, they move under control, as the body is possessed by the spirit ; it reveals the same life everywhere.

Strange, this outlook ! Each little human life of this or that saint, of sufferer or sinner, in itself so full of living interest, disclosing God's dealings with this soul or with that, who came and went and was laid with his fathers, and fell asleep as if that was the complete and rounded story ; in reality, each such life had been moving within a larger and enduring purpose ; each had been in the grasp of a Master Hand, unknown to itself, and had been brought into the service of a scheme that it could not measure or devise. Far from being rounded in itself, it had been thrown in simply to add a touch here and there to a great ideal, which was always gathering to itself strength, thrown in to illustrate this or that fragment of an Eternal counsel, to be one tiny stone in a mystical building, one strand of tapestry woven with the Divine Power to portray the Christ ! Each whole story is as but a chord that occurs in a prolonged musical

progression, which the composer arrives at, uses, and passes through to new developments and combinations. *Each life is a suggestion of a type, a prophecy*; it points beyond itself; it is manipulated from elsewhere. We watch this spirit of God completing its designs as we might watch the fingers of the swift worker at the loom catching at this thread or at that; as it lies there in a tumbled heap before him, and passing it with skilled security into the texture of the woven web. So rapid, so unexpected his motions, yet lo, the steady pattern rises, and every act and choice he makes is justified as the process reveals the finished work. So we know it is human material in the Bible stories, picked out, cut off, left, dropped, done with, sometimes a long continuous story, sometimes a stray isolated incident—Melchizedec or Cyrus, snatched up as it were from the darkness and then dropped; a king, now and then a child, some poor woman, some sufferer, each wanted for so long, for so much and for no more—just when needed, and then dropped and done with! Each no carved stone or thread, but a live human soul free and impulsive and yet acting under control, not like the mule driven by bit and bridle, but guided by the hand, each called and sent and used—recalcitrant as Pharaoh perhaps, unsteady as Esau, yet serving the one victorious purpose of Him whom nothing can baffle or escape or entangle or disappoint—this strong Potter who lays His hand upon the clay and moulds and bends it under the whirling wheel of Time. Nations and empires pass beneath His

sway, submissive as slaves that blindly toil : they may fail, they may sin, they may rebel, they may fall under judgment, and wrath—but still they must submit to the laws of the Mystery, still they contribute to the Eternal counsel, still the wrath will hold on its way toward one goal. So the kingdom is brought in and the day dawns, and the counsel of God fulfils itself. So from cover to cover the Bible records but one fact: it is a body possessed by a single dominant soul, and the Soul that possesses it is Jesus Christ.

And, beloved, this truth about the Bible, that it is a revelation throughout of Jesus Christ, is independent, let us all repeat, of all the minutiæ of criticism: it is itself the one supreme fact which it is the office of criticism to account for and to illuminate. We believe in the Bible because we believe in Jesus Christ, He being in Himself the sole interpretation to which the Bible submits. He is our Light by which we read it, He is our Touchstone by which we test its value, and assort its material. Taking Him with us as a Living King whom we know for Himself and love and serve by direct personal experience of what His presence reveals Him to be, taking Him a Living King with us, we travel the whole varied ground of the old Scriptures, and through all He speaks to us. He is the Key we find to all its perplexities ; He is the Harmony into which all its voices blend. He throws this or that into the background. He brings other parts forward to the front ; *His character is the Bible's conscience. His life is the meas-*

ure of its inspiration. And this prophetic correspondence, and coherence, and consistency, by which He shows Himself to be the consummation of that toward which the entire movement of Israel had been directed is the fact on which we stand and which no historical examination of documents can touch or shake. If it were the product, not of a dozen well-known authors, but of a prolonged and undefined national movement, so much the more marvelous becomes the result that they all terminate in Jesus Christ.

And, my brethren, as all these things were written aforetime for our learning, so it becomes us to learn from them the double lesson on which we have dwelt. *The double lesson to be learned in its natural sequence is first, as we have ever said, God puts Himself at our service, all His resources minister to our needs.* For us He works, for our comfort, for our patience, for our hope ; we individually are the centre of the action and God is teaching us how He will call, and watch, and guide, and solace, and feed, and forgive, and redeem ! And then our personal experience of spiritual summons : Christ washing our feet, all the abasement, the humiliation, the thanksgiving, the penitence, the praise ; we lift our hearts to the Lord. When that has been realized, when we have been strengthened and heartened, then an entirely new thing appears. Christ lifts Himself up from serving at our feet, He shows Himself risen as Christ the King, and as King it is He who is the centre, and we far away on the outlying circumference ; He who once ministered to

our needs now demands our service. It is not so much we who want Him as He who wants us. He is the supreme purpose of the Father, He, the one and only Presence, fills the entire horizon; *He is the absolute consummation to whose necessities all must conform*; He is the King and we are the kingdom, and the kingdom only exists in Him, in His breath, and in His will. Our one use is to express Him, be His tool in His hand, to be the word of His mouth. He will give us our value, He will determine by His own standard our place, our motions, our activities, our rank, our prophetic occupation, serving at His feet that we may be cleansed by the service of His royalty. Will God not help us as we sadly become aware, as we all must, of the fragmentary imperfection of human life—so little the things we do, so poor, and broken our work for Christ? Circumstances hinder, and action forbids, and sickness curtails, and nothing is completed. *No, nothing is completed; Christ alone completes.* We are the tiny fragments in the Eternal purpose which reaches out far beyond our range. Sometimes that purpose needs us in our activity, sometimes it wants us to stand aside and wait. We cannot tell, we cannot hope to be able to explain all that happens to us. Life in Christ's great kingdom, life in the light of Eastertide will be more of a mystery than ever before, for it means that we have been caught up into a larger scheme, which spreads far away out of sight, out of our judgment. And how can we say when we are useful and when we are useless? *Be constant, let Him use you as He*

will. Your little life, if it be but loyal in intention, has been caught up into the great Will of God, and fills a place in the Eternal kingdom. You cannot tell how or why. Enough that though you cannot see how or why, yet He who uses you as His instrument is still the same who made Himself your servant and washed your feet. Surely you can trust Him when the same who watched and tended you now disposes of you in His good pleasure in ways that seem to you strange? Be not afraid! Trust Him on and on. He knelt at your feet and now rules as your King.

VIII.

Second Week—Thursday—the Eighth Day of Lent.

The Feeding of the Multitude.¹

“When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”—ST. JOHN vi. 5.

THERE have been teachers who have wanted to give mankind a lofty inspiration, but seemed not to care whether men were hungry and thirsty or not. On the other hand, there have been teachers who simply dedicated themselves to the lower wants of humanity. If they could see men well fed and well housed they did not ask themselves whether there was any higher food with which they ought to supply the souls of those whose bodies had now been satiated. The richness and completeness of the life of Jesus seems to me to be shown in this almost as much as in anything, that *He cared for the wants of men from the topmost to the bottommost of men's lives.* So, as Jesus looked into the faces of the people who had followed Him across the Sea of Tiberias, He saw their hunger there. He saw that there was something which their bodies needed. We are especially told that there was no wonder,

¹ From a sermon by the Right Rev. Phillips Brooks, D. D., late Bishop of Massachusetts.

surprise or difficulty in the soul of Jesus Himself. He undertook to supply it. "This He said to prove him (Philip), for He Himself knew what He would do." But the disciple felt a wonder and a perplexity. He said, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not enough that every one of them may take a little." Then another spoke and said: "There is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?" Then Jesus, satisfied with that which they had, feeling capacity and power in Himself, bids the men sit down upon the grass, and proceeds to distribute to them that which seems so little, and to make it abundant for all their wants. The disciples were full of wonder at that which seemed insufficient. Jesus, seeing the sufficiency, applied it so that it was indeed enough for all around Him.

Is not the education of life under the training of Christ very largely this:—We mount up from possibility to possibility and little by little come to see sufficiency where we had seen entire insufficiency. A few loaves and the small fishes become abundant when Jesus looks upon them and exercises His power upon their substance.

A man finds himself to be in the midst of certain circumstances, and when he hears any great exhortation from any fellow-man bidding him to live a noble life, or any prompting within the soul, he says, "It is impossible in these circumstances; it is impossible that these few loaves and fishes should feed my nature so that it shall grow into such completion as is called for." So he sits down

in his listlessness and is not able to understand that which Jesus by and by comes and tells him, the completeness of these circumstances, their sufficiency at any rate for greater things than he is asked to do. Jesus says: "Let the men sit down. I will touch the loaves and fishes and they shall multiply before you. Only believe there is a greater possibility than you are able to see, and I will lead you forward to the realization of that possibility; and the little circumstances of your life shall unfold themselves and prove to be abundant accommodation for a great and growing human soul." As soon as the soul has come to feel that not it, but God, is the judge of the circumstances in which it is placed, that same change takes place which took place here.

Are you and I, my friends, to judge of the circumstances in which we are placed? It is good for us that we should help our brethren to make the circumstances of their lives as much richer than they are now as we possibly can. It is good for us that we should try to improve our own circumstances, and lift up our life so that we shall live among larger things, and that we should refuse to live among the lower things in which we find ourselves placed, so long as it is possible to live among higher things. But so far as we must live in the midst of difficult circumstances, let us feel that they are God's circumstances and not ours, and let Him be the judge and not ourselves of what should come forth from them.

There are souls mourning over their circum-

stances and saying: "If I only could be there where another sits in his richness and abundance of machinery and opportunity, then there would be something more for my soul." The soul is taking its own judgment of its possibilities rather than taking God's judgment. It is so much nobler to say: "God set me here to be true and not false, brave and not cowardly; it must be therefore possible for me to bring out of these circumstances something that shall be real food and sustenance and means of growth for this soul which He has set here and which He has never forgotten."

There is also another thing. *God teaches the soul not merely that it may be fed through its circumstances, but that it may be fed directly from Him in spite of its circumstances.* There is an immediate relation of the soul to God, a personal supply coming from the Divine richness, something that can come down from God in spite of circumstances, if not through circumstances; that can make the soul to be fed and enlarged until it shall become what God intended it to be; what God bade it to be when He sent His Son into the world. God never would have called me to enter into a higher life if He had placed me in circumstances where it was impossible. Men living in circumstances which seem to imprison them and to give them no opportunity to escape, men living in drudgery and poverty, seeming to have nothing to do but to earn their hard bread and water from day to day; again and again these men have found themselves, if they trusted in God and lifted their eyes above

their circumstances up to Him, have found their lives growing wise with a wisdom that has come to them in the midst of the poor things by which they were surrounded. They have found their souls at liberty, even in the midst of dungeons, and so have walked in spiritual pastures wide, and climbed mountain heights, while lingering in cells where they could scarcely stand upright. And so they have served their brethren as they went on in their pilgrimage of pain.

IX.

Second Week—Friday—the Ninth Day of Lent.

What if We Turn Away From Christ?¹

“Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”—ST. JOHN vi. 68.

IF we are ever tempted to turn away from Christ we may safely challenge our tempters to show us anything better than His religion. They may make objections to what we hold, but after all we can defy them to show us a better way.

Let us fancy for a moment that in an hour of weakness we have listened to the temptation to go away from Christ. In what respect then shall we find that we have increased our happiness or usefulness? What solid thing shall we get to replace what we have given up?

Can we find peace for conscience, strength for duty, power against temptation, comfort in trouble, support in the hour of death, hope in looking forward to the grave? We may well ask. These things are only found by those who live the life of faith in a crucified and risen Christ.

To whom, indeed, shall we go for help, strength, and comfort? We live in a world of troubles,

¹From a sermon by the Right Rev. J. C. Ryle, D. D., Bishop of Liverpool, England.

whether we like it or not. You can no more prevent them, than the Danish king could prevent the tide rising and rudely swelling round the royal chair. Our bodies are liable to a thousand ailments, and our hearts to a thousand sorrows.

No creature on earth is so vulnerable and capable of intense physical and mental suffering as man. Sickness, death, partings, losses, failures, disappointments, and private family trials which no other mortal eye sees, will break in upon us from time to time, and human nature imperatively demands help to meet them. Alas! where will human nature find such help if we leave Christ?

The plain truth is that *nothing but an almighty personal Friend will ever meet the legitimate wants of man's soul.* Metaphysical notions, philosophical theories, abstract ideas, vague speculations about the unseen, the infinite, the inner light, and so forth, may satisfy a select few for a time. But the vast majority of mankind, if they have any religion at all, will never be content with a religion which does not supply them with a person, to whom they may look and trust. And this principle once admitted, where will you find one so perfectly fitted to satisfy man as the Christ? Look round the world, and point out, if you can, any object of faith fit to be compared with this blessed Son of God, set forth before our eyes in the Gospels.

Perhaps some of my younger hearers are secretly thinking that the difficulties of revealed religion are inexplicable, and trying to persuade

themselves that they know not “where to go” in these dark and cloudy days. I entreat them to consider that the difficulties of unbelief are far greater.

The great argument of probability is entirely on your side. Surely it is wiser to cling to Christ and Christianity, with all its alleged difficulties, than to launch on an ocean of uncertainties, and travel toward the grave hopeless, comfortless, and professing to know nothing at all about the unseen world. Departure from Christ on account of the supposed hardness of certain doctrines will secure no immunity from mental conflicts. The problems of Christianity may seem great and deep; but the problems of unbelief are greater and deeper still.

Then let them consider that myriads of men and women, in these last eighteen centuries, have found in Christ the “words of eternal life” not merely “words” but solid realities. They have been persuaded of them, and embraced them, and found them meat and drink to their souls. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, who in the faith of these words have lived happy and useful lives, and died glorious deaths. Where is he that will dare to deny this? Where shall we find such lives and deaths without Christ?

It was faith in Christ’s “words of eternal life” that made St. Peter and St. John stand up boldly before the Jewish Council, and confess their Master without fear of consequences, saying “There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved.”

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" that made St. Paul come out from Judaism, spend his life in preaching the gospel, and say, on the brink of the grave, "I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" that made Bishop Hooper go boldly to the stake at Gloucester, after saying, "Life is sweet and death is bitter ; but eternal life is more sweet and eternal death more bitter."

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" that made Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer endure a fiery death in Oxford, rather than deny the principles of the Reformation.

It was faith in Christ's "words of eternal life" which made Henry Martyn turn his back on ease and distinction at Cambridge, go forth to a tropical climate, and die a solitary death as a missionary.

What a fearful contrast to such facts as these appears in the lives and deaths of those who turn their backs on Christ, and seek other masters ! What fruits can the advocates of non-Christian theories, and ideas, and principles, point to with all their cleverness ? What holy, loving, peaceful quietness of spirit have they exhibited ? What victories have they won over darkness, immorality, superstition, and sin ? What countries have they civilized or moralized ? What neglected home populations have they improved ? It is only those who can say with St. Peter, "Thou hast the words of eternal life," who make a mark on mankind for

good while they live, and say, "O death, where is thy sting?" when they die.

Let us beware of a religion in which Christ has not His rightful place. Let us never try to satisfy ourselves with a little cheap formal Christianity, taken on carelessly on Sunday morning, and laid aside at night, but not influencing us during the week. Such Christianity will neither give us peace in life, nor hope in death, nor power to resist temptation, nor comfort in trouble. Christ only has "the words of eternal life," and His words must be received, believed, embraced, and made the meat and drink of our souls. A Christianity without living, felt communion with Him, without grasp of the benefits of His blood and intercession, a Christianity without Christ's sacrifice and His priesthood, is a powerless, wearisome form.

Let us then "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," if we have reason to hope we are Christ's true servants. Let men laugh at us, and try to turn us away as much as they please. Let us calmly and humbly say to ourselves at such times, "After all, to whom can I go if I leave Christ?" He has "words of eternal life." Myriads find them meat and drink to their souls. I can see nothing better. I will cling to Christ and His words. They never yet have failed any one who trusted them, and they will not fail me.

X.

Second Week—Saturday—the Tenth Day of Lent.

Christ and the Day of Rest.¹

“That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”—I ST. PETER iv. 11.

THE two great cardinal principles on which Sunday is founded are rest and worship. And they cannot be separated. If you keep a day merely for rest, you will find that universal amusement will soon creep in upon you, and mean universal labor. The principle of worship, of sanctity, of sacredness to God is the only principle which can protect properly the principle of rest. And, on the other hand, you cannot have a day consecrated to worship and self-recollection, and the fear of God unless it is also a day of rest. If you make it an ordinary day with ordinary occupations then you will have neither leisure nor taste for dwelling on the realities of the unseen world.

I should like to remind you once more of the very beautiful version of the fourth commandment in the book of Deuteronomy. “Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; six days shalt thou labor and do all

¹ From a sermon by Rev. William Macdonald Sinclair, D. D., of England.

thy work ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God ; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates, that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou." Here the observance is put on its true grounds : rest for all alike, high and low, rich and poor.

The observance of the first day of the week as a time for rest and worship is protected by the ancient laws of the land. On the first day of the week no places of public amusement may be opened. On the first day of the week there are enactments against trading. The sanctity of the day of our Lord's resurrection is part of the recognized law of the land. There is, indisputably, a quiet calm over both town and country which contrasts with the busy operations of other days, and is to the weary spirit inexpressibly refreshing.

Now there are two sets of people who would wish to alter this happy condition of things. There are the theorists who do not like legislation which is directly Christian, and who, to a considerable extent, not themselves believing in religion, would desire to abolish any regulations which recognize a revelation. And there are the selfish, irreligious, worldly people, both in high and in low life, who, having themselves no occasion to labor, are perfectly reckless as to whether their own pleasures and amusements destroy the rest of those who have to work for their convenience.

“Sunday is,” as Longfellow called it, “a golden clasp which binds together the volume of the week.” “Sunday,” said Addison, “clears away the rust of the whole week.” “It is not too much to say,” said Norman Macleod, “that without the Sunday the Church of Christ could not, as a visible society, exist on earth. The observance of Sunday is a public profession of our Christian faith. By its profanation we bring disgrace on our religion, and give great scandal to our fellow-Christians.” “So diseased,” wrote Julius Hare, “are the appetites of those who live in what is called the fashionable world, that they mostly account Sunday a very dull day; yet of all days it is the one on which our highest faculties ought to be employed the most vigorously, and to find the deepest, most absorbing interest.” “Oh, what a blessing is Sunday,” exclaimed William Wilberforce, the emancipator of the slaves, “interposed between the waves of worldly business, like the divine path for the Israelites through Jordan. There is nothing in which I would advise you to be more strictly conscientious than in keeping the Sabbath day holy. I can truly declare that to me the Sabbath day has been invaluable.”

As a guide for Christians in fulfilling the fourth commandment, nothing can be better than the old rule of no labor except works of piety, charity and necessity. Innocent recreation, such as the society of our friends, is encouraged by the example of our Lord. Every work which is a heavenly work,—every work which is done in the service of the

kingdom of God, belongs especially to the day of rest and is its best support.

Wisely do our laws sanction the abstaining, as far as possible, from labor, leaving it otherwise to each man's own conscience how he shall employ his rest. Wise shall we be if we use this priceless opportunity for coming especially before our God, striving more zealously than is possible on any other day to remember why we were born, where we are going, why we believe in God, what is the meaning of the Father, what is the meaning of the Son, what is the meaning of the Holy Ghost, what is the purpose of redemption, what are the privileges of our Christian calling, what are our duties as shown in the life of our Lord, what are our hopes after death, what are our reasons for praying, what are the grounds of our faith, what are the riches of our inheritance.

Thus we shall know for ourselves why through the resurrection of Christ the day of religious rest has gradually passed from the type to the anti-type —from the commemoration of the Jewish deliverance from a temporal bondage to the commemoration of Christian redemption from spiritual thralldom. We shall understand in our own experience why, in the writings of the early Fathers, it is styled a solemn and venerable day, the first and chief of days, the first-fruits of the week, better than all the festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths of the Mosaic law, higher than the highest, and to be held in admiration above all other days; the queen, the princess; or as an old translator with quaint simplicity

expresses it, the lady paramount of days, clearly and preëminently the first; the day which the Lord hath made, that we may rejoice and be glad in it, and which, to use the strong word of St. Augustine, "if we are Christians we shall observe," so "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Above all, let it have its full and proper meaning as the consecration of the rest of the week. Just as the Christian ministry are chosen out, not for special holiness, but because all the Lord's people are holy, all are kings and priests to God, and yet some must minister to others in holy things; so the first day of the week is adopted, not because all the days of our lives are not dedicated to God, but because by hallowing one more we may hallow the others better and more perfectly.

If you, indeed, wish to be in the spirit of the Lord's day, you will not treat it as something singular,—a passing episode after which you relapse into your ordinary life. It will be to you a day which is to communicate its temper and sunshine to all the other days of the week. It will be to you those brightest hours, toward which all your other hours are to approach as nearly as may be. It will be to you, not a duty, but a privilege; not a law, but a desire; not a task, but a refreshment and relaxation.

XI.

Third Week—Monday—the Eleventh Day in Lent.

Love Your Neighbor.¹

“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said unto him: Thou hast answered right; this do and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?”—ST. LUKE x. 25–29.

THIS lawyer was one of those to whom a precious truth had become an empty truism. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” was a command so familiar to him, that it had ceased to influence his conduct. The frequent repetition of the fine sentiment, and the steady neglect to turn it into action, had produced in him the usual self-complacency of the Pharisees. He was evidently taken aback by the simple answer of our Lord, “This *do* and thou shalt live,” which was not only a home-thrust to his conscience, but made him look rather foolish before the bystanders. To justify himself, therefore, perhaps to his conscience, perhaps to the onlookers, he

¹ From a sermon by Rev. G. G. Brown, M. A., Rector of All Saints' Church, Colchester, England.

put the question, so common in every Christian's life, "And who is my neighbor?"

The passage suggests two thoughts:

Firstly, the Divine command, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; and secondly, the question, Who is my neighbor?

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance assigned by Christ to love. He summed up the moral precepts of the law in the one great commandment of love. He made the loving spirit the very essence of the Christian character,—the visible evidence of His own presence in the soul. Where love is, there He is. So the Master taught, and so His greatest servants taught. St. Paul, St. Peter and St. John, each gave the same high place to love. They differed on many points, but they agreed on this, that the one thing most needful in the Christian is the loving heart.

They each tell us to love our neighbor. Their instruction appears straightforward and easy till we try to turn it into practice. We can all talk, like the lawyer, about loving our neighbors as ourselves; only, like him, we are brought up with a start, when our Lord suddenly whispers, "This *do* and thou shalt live." He replied by asking, "Who is my neighbor?" Who are those whom I am to love as myself? Perhaps he was insincere, and only argued for argument's sake; perhaps he only wished to excuse his loveless conduct, or to avert a dialectical defeat before the multitude; but, whatever his motive was, he expressed a real difficulty. If we have thought about the matter at all, I believe the same

question has occurred to us over and over again. The difficulty has certainly been present in our lives, whether we have consciously expressed it to ourselves or not. For instance, does the precept mean that I am bound, as a Christian, to love all with whom I come into contact? Does God expect a positive feeling of affection to be felt by me for every one whom I meet for half an hour, for every one with whom I do business? Am I to love the disagreeable people, the bad-tempered, the lazy, the selfish? Am I to love the slanderer, the mischief-maker, the liar, the oppressor? Put the question in a concrete form—does every one here to-night love the present Sultan of Turkey? Do you feel that you ought to love him? If you ask yourself that plain question, and ask it in the presence of God, is the answer not audibly given to your soul by the Holy Spirit, that you are not bound to love him; that righteous anger is the only feeling that such an inhuman monster should call out; that you may breathe, with a clear conscience, the words of the 109th Psalm, "Let his days be few, and let another take his office."

The question, Who is my neighbor? could be easily answered if the world were wholly good. It would then be easy to love every one as yourself. The difficulty arises because so much that is not good is to be found on every hand. It is hard, indeed impossible, to love every one, because sin in so many forms is present around us, as well as within us. You know this one who is a cheat; how can you love him? You know another who is a hypocrite;

how can you love him? Another is an oppressor, a slave-driver, a hard money-grabber. Another has a spiteful heart and a mischievous tongue; another is vain and silly; another is cold and selfish. Can you love them at all? It is difficult to forgive, difficult even to make allowances for such people; but as for loving them, we cannot do it; and God cannot ask of us impossibilities. Yet, on the other hand, our Saviour bids us live with hearts tender and full of love, gentle even to our enemies. St. Paul tells us that the greatest force on earth is charity; and St. Peter pleads with us, "Above all, have fervent charity one to another."

The difficulty of deciding how we ought to feel toward certain people quickly melts away when we remember that *anger against wrongdoing is perfectly consistent with Christian charity*. The Son of God, the very Lord of Love Himself, felt a burning indignation against the selfish, hard, religious men of his day. Look at His terrible words of wrath in the 23d chapter of St. Matthew, 13th to 33d verses. He begins, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," and He ends with, "O ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the judgment of hell." Or look at St. Paul's language, when his spirit is fired at the sight of wrong. He called the high priest "a whitened sepulchre." He told the Jews at Antioch "that they had thrust the word of God from them, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life." Of his enemy, Alexander the coppersmith, he said, "the Lord reward him according to his works." One quotation will

show how St. Peter could feel toward hardened and impenitent wrongdoers. "Their sentence from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not; they are like natural brute beasts."

The example of our Lord, then, as well as that of St. Paul and St. Peter, shows us that righteous indignation, not forgiving gentleness or easy indifference, is the feeling we ought to have toward the hypocrite, the oily liar, the successful oppressor, the betrayer of the innocent. Who then is the neighbor that I must love as myself? The simplest answer is suggested by our Lord in the parable of the Good Samaritan—*your neighbor is any one whom you can help.* The hypocrite may be your neighbor, if you can help him by curing him of his insincerity. The liar is your neighbor if you can make him truthful. The grumbler is your neighbor if you can bring contentment and cheerfulness into his heart. Even your enemy may be your neighbor. If the enmity originated in any fault of yours, you must make amends. If he is to blame, if he has injured you, the commandment, "Love your enemy," does not mean that you must overlook his offense, and feel toward him as if it had not been committed. It requires a harder thing of you—that you shall go to him in a friendly spirit, and try to bring him to repentance. The poor man who needs your money; the sick, whom you can visit and cheer; the mourner, whom you can comfort; the fallen, whom you may raise; the lonely, whose lives you may brighten—they are all your neighbors, for there is something you can do for them. Your

love can express itself in the effort to help them, in the fervent prayer for them, in the word of sympathy, in the home-thrust rebuke, lovingly given. But what, you will say, of those whom I cannot serve in any way? Most of the people I meet have no particular need of my help. How am I to feel toward them? Are they not neighbors, to be loved as myself? Yes, they are. But be not misled by the words to be loved as myself. Translate them into "*feel toward others as you would they should feel toward you,*" and you will see at once that you are not expected to develop strong affections for every one you meet. What you can do is what you would wish them to do. You can have a general lovingness of heart, a kind friendliness, a warm geniality of manner, at least a readiness to be pleasant to them.

But after all, some of us may feel, I knew this all before. I know I ought to be loving, ready to help whom I can, courteous and kind to all, except the hard and impenitent evil-doers, who rarely cross my path. My difficulty is to do it. "*This do and thou shalt live,*" says my Saviour to my soul. "*Alas! Lord, I cannot,*" my soul replies; "*I have so little love within, my heart is naturally so cold.*" If you honestly feel that, you are already on the way to Heaven; for you know your weak point and your besetting want, you know that *more love is the great need of your life.* And you also know where your want may be supplied. Ask for a loving heart, and it will not be denied. Ask for it in faith, believing that you shall receive it. Ask for it with the per-

sistent prayer of the importunate widow, and it shall be given you by the Father, who knows how to give good gifts to His children. Other things you may ask for without receiving—more money, worldly success, better health, more happiness, God may refuse in answer to your prayer. But the heart that loves He will not, nay, cannot refuse, for His own true nature is love, and you are made in His image.

XII.

Third Week—Tuesday—the Twelfth Day of Lent.

Use your Opportunities.¹

“Redeeming the time.”—EPH. v. 16.

Now these words do not express clearly St. Paul’s meaning. He is not speaking of what we commonly call time, but rather of opportunity, and what he says to us is this: Look out for opportunities, lay hold of them and make use of them; or, to use his striking language: Buy them up in the market that you may turn them to profit; for that is what his words really mean. So, you see, the subject suggested to us by these words of the Apostle is this—the right use of opportunities.

Now it is not too much to say that *this right use of opportunities constitutes the very science of life*, if we may so speak. If you will think of it for a moment you will see that it is true. In every department of life this is the underlying principle which must regulate us: this is the great secret of success, this buying up of opportunities. Look at the men of the world! Look at your own experience! Look at the statesman, how cautiously he waits, sometimes year after year with a great per-

¹ From a sermon by the Rt. Hon. and Most Rev. Wm. D. Magellan D. D., Archbishop of York, England.

plexing, terrible question before him, which he longs to solve, difficulties he longs to get rid of, but he waits till the proper moment, till the right opportunity, and then seizes and makes use of it. Look at the merchant, how he watches every turn in the market, how he reads daily in the newspapers the state of the money market and the trade abroad and at home, and waits long before he makes his venture, but when the opportunity offers to him how readily, how speedily he makes use of it! Think of the doctor watching over some serious case where life is in danger, and all may depend upon some critical operation. Day after day he says, "I cannot venture yet; things are not ripe for it, and we must wait the time." But when the time comes, then with precision, with energy and readiness, he does his work, it may be for the saving of a precious life.

Look at the soldier, the general regulating the movements of a great campaign, how he watches every march of the enemy, every change of position he takes up, before he strikes his final blow, waiting and deferring and hoping, yet pausing till at last the opportunity offers—the enemy has made a mistake, he has placed himself in a weak position, and then the general makes use of the opportunity, and so gains his victory. Yes, I say, the right use of opportunities is really the great science of life, it is the rule by which the men of the world act and by which they win success—the right use of opportunities.

But *it is equally true in the spiritual world*, only,

alas ! the children of this world are wiser for their own purposes than the children of light. They far more readily and eagerly use their opportunities than God's children do. And there is one great difference : in the world, the world of commerce, the world of warfare, the world of science, a man may fail for lack of opportunities. How often one has heard a man say, as old age surprised him in a state of poverty and failure, "I never had my chance. My neighbor there had his opportunity and he made use of it. I give him credit for the wisdom with which he used his chance, but he had it, and I had none." You have all known cases like that, and very sad they are, for there is a good deal of truth in them, although it is, perhaps, not the whole truth. But in the spiritual world that can never be. There is no lack of opportunities. God makes them for us, and with His wise foresight and Fatherly care He puts them within our reach. The great thing is that we should seize them and use them to His glory and to our own good. Now that is something of what St. Paul means by redeeming the time. I say there is no lack of opportunities in the spiritual world. Life is full of opportunities, as full as the heaven is of the stars, if only we had eyes to see them and wisdom to use them when they come.

Nay, life itself is one great opportunity. Let us think of life in that way. This life of ours in this world is really, when you look at the essence of it, and the inner purpose of it, a great opportunity which God gives to each one of us. It may last

for a longer or a shorter time—that matters not. It is an opportunity, and if we make right use of it it will end in blessing and everlasting joy. What is the great object of our life? How seldom we face that question! How seldom we sit down by ourselves and ask, “To what end was I born, and for what cause came I into this world?” Surely not only to get on, as people believe in whatever line of life we may have chosen, whatever may be our calling, not merely to get on, to get above our neighbors, to gain for ourselves a certain amount of money, or of comfort, or of pleasure, and then—and then!—when health fails, and old age comes, to be buried in a grave. My friends, God made us for nobler things than these. It is a miserable conception of the purposes of life when we limit its great ends, as we very often do—do we not?—to such secondary aims and objects as these.

The temptation comes to us to think of life wholly from this miserable money and pleasure-seeking point of view.

What is happiness from the Christian's point of view? Is it not the satisfaction, the perfect and permanent satisfaction, of all the nobler desires and capacities which God has implanted in us? That is happiness! Men may seek to satisfy their desires in ignoble or in wicked ways, but yet they are right in their conception of happiness—it is the perfect and the permanent satisfaction of desire, but then we must not forget the higher desires which God has implanted in each one of us whom He has made in His own image. So happiness is,

after all, our search. Happiness is what God's Word sets before us, and it is described to us in beautiful words, which are household words among us, as we speak of those joys which are at God's right hand, the unspeakable joys which God has prepared for them that love Him. That is happiness from the Christian's point of view, and *in the search for happiness lies the way to work in life.*

The Christian knows that the happiness of which he is in search must be perfect, and it must be permanent, and therefore it is not a happiness that belongs to this world; *it is a happiness which waits for him in another world* and for which this world is nothing more than a brief preparation. If only we thoroughly get hold of that law and hide it in our hearts and have it continually present to our minds, we shall be watchful for opportunities and the more eager to use them when they come—opportunities of getting ready for that perfect and that permanent happiness which waits for us in our Heavenly Father's home.

Our Lord has told us that *the great secret of preparation for the life to come* is not only to know God and to love God, but to grow like to God. Day by day we ought to be seeking to become more like our Father in heaven.

There are seasons of grace which God sends to us in our private lives, there are others which come to us in the life of the Church, and such a time is Lent. The yearly season of Lent is a great and a blessed opportunity.

And so let me end with one or two practical sug-

gestions with regard to this Lenten season. What is it all about? It is a time *for looking back on our past lives* and seeing how they look, and what record there must be written down of them in the Book of God—dragging out into the light boldly and honestly our sins, then with true penitence of heart to lay the burden of our sin at the feet of the Crucified; His precious blood can cleanse from sin.

And so, again, out of that penitence is to spring endeavor after higher things. If every remembrance of sin is to us a fresh stimulus and encouragement to higher endeavor, if all through this holy season we are trying deliberately to get the better of some sin, some evil habit that still clings to us—it may be a sin of omission or a sin of commission—let us strive by God's strength to overcome it, strive by the guidance of the Holy Spirit to escape from it, strive by the love of Jesus to renounce it, and we should then, indeed, be redeeming the time, buying up the precious opportunities and gaining unspeakable blessing to ourselves.

XIII.

Third Week—Wednesday—the Thirteenth Day of Lent.

On Being Helpful to Others.¹

“The law of Christ. . . . Bear ye one another’s burdens.”—
GALATIANS vi. 2.

SYMPATHY, like every other feeling implanted in us by nature, is intended to prompt us to action. It is of no use to feel with others, unless we are thereby stimulated to do something for them.

Life, in the true sense of the word, is not feeling but work. Napoleon’s test, “What has he done?” is perfectly applicable in the moral sphere. The good man, no less than the great man, is the man who has done something. Out on the sympathy of those persons who shed floods of tears over the imaginary woes described in a novel or a play, and never do anything to lessen the actual woes around them, of which those descriptions are but copies! Out on the sympathy which always tries to thrust the burden of relief upon some other shoulders! Sympathy is of no use unless it leads to action.

And further, it is of no use *unless it leads to the right kind of action*. It is possible to act on the instigation of impulse, and at the same time to do more harm than good. “Some rub the sore when

¹ From a sermon by Rev. A. W. Momerie, D. Sc., of England,

they would heal the wound ;" and so the sufferer would have been better off if they had *not* sympathized with him. There are few persons in the world who more often act ill, than those who are always declared to mean well. It is not enough then, to have sympathy ; it is not enough to act on the instigation of sympathy. If we would be really helpful, we must be sure that we are acting rightly. And to do this, we must see the bearing of our action upon the circumstances of the case. *Helpfulness may be defined as the judicious carrying out of sympathy.*

Here we have another and a striking illustration of the importance of thought. We shall never be helpful until we learn to think. If our sympathy is to be of any use, it must be thoughtfully, and not thoughtlessly, acted on. Just as it is not enough to desire our own good, but if we are to achieve it, we must carefully consider the best means to be employed—so it is not enough to desire the good of others. If that good is to be promoted by us, we must give the subject at least as much reflection as prudence would require us to give to the promotion of our own. To be really, wisely helpful, we must make the interests of others part of our own scheme of life.

Let me give you two illustrations of the necessity there is for thought, if sympathy is to be converted into helpfulness. Let us *take the case of speech*. It is impossible to overestimate the amount of good, as it is impossible to overestimate the amount of harm, which we are capable of doing, by the use or

abuse of the tongue. Many a man has been saved from moral ruin, many a man has been prevented from throwing up the game of life in despair, by a few well-chosen words of remonstrance or encouragement. But the mere feeling of sympathy alone will not suggest the seasonable word; that can only be arrived at by thought.

There is nothing about which we ought to be so careful as our speech; and yet there is nothing in regard to which most of us are so careless. We say whatever first occurs to us, without waiting to consider the result. And there are many of us, to whom it is generally the wrong thing that occurs first.

There is a large number of well-meaning persons, who always manage—quite contrary to their intention—to wound instead of soothe. They say what is harmful through sheer stupidity. And this stupidity is sin; for it is merely a form of laziness—laziness shrinking from the fatigue of thought. When they find they have caused pain, they try to excuse themselves by saying they “didn’t think.” A pitiful excuse! Why didn’t they think? What is the use of being a man if you don’t think? Such people would appear to be driven into speech by an inordinate dread of silence. They seem to imagine that a terrible disgrace would have befallen them, could they ever be accused of having for an instant held their tongues. They will say anything rather than say nothing. No wonder they do harm. “It is never more difficult to talk well,” says one, “than when we are ashamed to be silent.” But

this dread of silence is extremely silly. It was a maxim of the Duke of Wellington's, "When you don't know what to do, do nothing." And the corresponding maxim is just as self-evidently valid,—when you don't know what to say, when you are not sure of the right and wise thing to say, say nothing. Not only in politics, but in conversation, there is much need oftentimes of a "masterly inactivity." Silence may occasionally be more helpful—nay, even more eloquent, than speech.

Still, if we would take the trouble to think, we might generally, even in the most desperate cases, after the first paroxysms of the sufferer's anguish were over—we might generally find something to say that would be really helpful to him.

There is one other point very apt to be overlooked. I refer to *the helpfulness of example*. By what we say and do, we are only directly affecting the *comfort* of others, but we are indirectly changing their *characters*. We may not only contribute to their happiness, but we may make them morally better. By acting rightly ourselves, we may help others, may make it easier for others, to bear their burden of duty. There is no surer way of helping a man to cope with his difficulties and to conquer his temptations, than by showing him that we have obtained the mastery over ours. There is no surer way of stimulating a man to give up bad habits, than by exemplifying, in our own lives, the beauty and the charm of good ones. And the stimulus of our example will not end with death. We may lighten the burden of duty for generations yet un-

born. By living wisely and well, we shall confer incalculable blessings upon many who will never know us, who may never even hear of us. We may give them a better moral start in life than, but for our efforts, they could possibly have had. But alas for those who come after us, if we live unwisely and ill! Through no fault of their own, but entirely because of our misdeeds, it may be next to impossible for them to be anything but bad. We may make their burden of duty a burden too heavy to be borne.

XIV.

Third Week—Thursday—the Fourteenth Day of Lent.

Responsibility for Others.¹

“Where is Abel thy brother?”—GEN. iv. 9.

LET us take this question as if it were addressed to ourselves individually, and let us lay it well to heart. Let us think of it as bringing before us our responsibility for others. It is a very serious question ; it calls for an answer ; it must be answered. May God give us grace to answer it aright ! And, first of all, we will consider the question as it relates to those who are near and dear to us ; those whose names and faces are familiar to us ; those who are connected with us by the bonds of kindred or affection, parents, wife, husband, children, all that inner circle of friends and relations ; all whom we acknowledge to have been, in some sense or other, committed by God to our safe-keeping and care—How have I discharged my responsibility ?

What have I done for the temporal welfare of those who are so closely connected with me by ties of kindred, and who ought to be so bound up with me in the bonds of affection as to be included in the term “brethren”? Have I diligently worked for

¹ From a sermon by Rev. W. C. Ingram, Canon of Peterborough Cathedral, England.

them and tried in every way to advance their best interests? Then as to their social happiness. Have I thought for them and cared for them, putting away all selfish thoughts and motives? Have I, by purity, love and gentleness, done my part toward making their life bright, happy and lovely, and such as it ought to be?

Then, again, as to the intellectual training and welfare of the children: Where are they as to this, so far as I have had to do with the matter? Have I given them a good education and wise instruction, such as is best calculated to enable them to take their proper place in the world amongst those with whom it is reasonable to expect that they will be placed; having in my mind a high and noble, but not in any sense a foolish or extravagant ambition as to their future? Has this education been carried on with due regard to their higher powers? Have I tried to instil into them the importance of the training of the conscience and the duty of obeying it? How about their knowledge of the Faith? Do they know, and do they understand the great dogmas of the Faith? Have they an intelligent knowledge of the great verities of the Christian religion? Where are they so far as the matter of their religious knowledge goes? Do I know where they are?

The image of God is stamped upon every soul born into the world. That image is, since the Fall, marred and defaced, it is true, but it is still there. The work of God the Holy Ghost is the restoration of that image, the bringing it out more and more

brightly, clearly and distinctly. Ah! then the question, looked at from this point of view, becomes invested with a meaning of terrible importance. "Where is Abel thy brother?"

What have I done to help forward that work of the restoration of the image of God in the soul of my brother? Have I done anything to hinder that work, or to obscure that image?

The question is a most serious one. Let us look at it a little more closely and consider it somewhat in detail.

First, then, there is the question of the example which I have set before others, especially before those of my own household who come day by day, in a greater or less degree, under the influence of my example. What has the influence of my example been? Have I by it led those thus committed to my safe-keeping nearer to, or further from God? Have they seen or heard me make light of sin? Have they seen me careless or neglectful of the worship of God? Have they seen me lax in the observance of His laws? Has my life been a real help to them in their spiritual life, or has it in any sense laid stumbling-blocks in their way?

Again, there is not only the question of example, but there is also that of precept. Have I tried with all my power to teach them as well as to lead them in the right way? Have I watched with prudent care the teaching they have received from others, as well as that which I myself have given them? What kind of wise and prudent supervision have I

exercised over the books they have read ? Have I been careful that the tone of conversation in the home should be such as to maintain, clear and strong, the purity and the faith of my household ? And is not this question of the tone and character of conversation one which needs special attention in the present day ? Is it, generally speaking, incapable of improvement ?

Then there is also the question of my prayers. Have I been very careful to surround all my dear ones with that shield of protection ?

Parents are all anxious that their children should do well and get on well in life. They very eagerly and earnestly seek, in their behalf, the influence of those who may be able to help them on. They leave nothing undone that will advance their temporal welfare. And these efforts are right ; beyond all question it is their duty to make them. But are they so earnest or so diligent as they ought to be in their daily intercessions to Him who alone can give to them the highest of all blessings, viz, the grace to lead a pure and holy life ?

Now as regards this aspect of the question of our responsibility, we do not suggest that any one of us would for a moment wish to deny it, or to repudiate it. We all accept it. Those thus near and dear to us, are placed in our safe-keeping. We acknowledge it. But the question for each of us to consider is this : Do I really keep the thought of this responsibility sufficiently before me, and do I really discharge my obligations in all this as I ought to do ?

The matter, however, reaches further out than this. Responsibility rests upon us in some way or other, with regard to every one with whom we are brought into contact ; the friends and acquaintances of our life ; all those with whom we have business relations ; the various members of that circle of society in which we move ; our more casual acquaintances ; the fellow-travelers we meet on our journeys—there is a responsibility resting upon us with regard to them all.

“Where is thy brother?” Where is he morally and spiritually, so far as the influence, however slight it may have been, which I have exercised over him goes ?

To have laughed at the evil or profane joke ; to have spoken the thoughtless, the foolish, or the angry word ; to have exhibited irritability or impatience—to say nothing of far more grievous stumbling-blocks than these—must have had some influence over others.

Ah, alas ! we must each confess that, at some time or other, we have said and done something, the effect of which was evil on some one else,—something tending to deface in the soul of another the image of God ; something which tended to lead that soul into temptation, if not into sin.

Marvelous opportunities have been afforded us in life of helping others to resist temptation, and to stand firm. How have these opportunities been used ? Have we used them at all ? “Where is thy brother ?” The question is a very searching one.

Ah, how the question widens out as we think of

it! Perhaps we have never truly realized that in some sense we are responsible to God for those whom we may never have seen. We say responsible in some sense because the responsibility extends only so far as does our power to help. "Where is thy brother?" What have I done of my alms to stay or alleviate, in ever so slight a degree, that poverty which, with all its carking cares, so often ends in crushing out hope and bringing despair? What have I done by quietly and consistently living the faith I profess, to strengthen the faith of others, and thus to check the spread of that irreligion which is so common in the world around me? What have I done by a life of purity in thought, word and deed, to help others to resist evil, and to stay the tide of that evil laxity of morals that is destroying the manhood of the nation? What have I done by my prayers and by my alms to spread abroad the light of the Gospel of Christ in the dark places of the earth; not merely in the dark places of heathendom, but also in the dark places at home, which the mere light of a refined civilization can never of itself brighten? "Where is thy brother?"

XV.

Third Week—Friday—the Fifteenth Day of Lent.

Mutual Help.¹

“Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul.”—ACTS xi. 25.

THE new harvest, the new religious opportunities at Antioch needed more workers, and St. Barnabas sought St. Paul to help him. This companionship in work suggests first of all the general thought of *the mutual influence of companions*. Some are made by their companions, some are marred; some would have been unable to express themselves in the world without such aid, some would have been great had it not been for such a hindrance. A man is made or marred by his friends, in a way in which he would hardly care to believe, in the mysterious influence which asserts itself in the words, the example, the gradual shaping of a friend. We are associated with others, those whom we choose and those whom we would avoid, those who do us good, and those who may easily do us harm—personal friends, characters in books, business associates, casual acquaintances, those who simply influence us as part of the world in which we are called to play our part.

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. Canon Newbolt of England.

Again we are dependent on others for some of the richest privileges of our life. Just as an unknown Ananias baptizes the great apostle of the Gentiles, we are dependent on others for Confirmation, for our spiritual food in Holy Communion, for all the rich stores of grace which God has left us in His Church. It would seem that in some cases, human nature without the particular influence which God designed to be brought to bear on it, would be like a magnificent instrument of music, with no one at hand to play upon it and evoke its powers.

How are we learning to adapt ourselves and profit by our relationship to others? The whole tendency of life seems to be for each to make himself the centre round which everything turns, as if the sun shone for him alone, and the affairs of the world were regulated for his benefit, as if friends lived to add to his amusement, and died for his enrichment, as if the health of others were of little account provided that his own house was ornamented, or even as if the souls of others were of no concern to him so long as he could find pleasure. The sending forth the disciples two by two by Christ is the setting forth of the principle of mutual responsibility and coöperation; and this is a principle which has to fight to the death with human selfishness in its coarsest as well as in its subtlest forms.

It is surely unnecessary to dwell on the coarser forms of a sinful selfishness, where men use their power, their position, their influence to corrupt others simply to enable them to follow their own

gratifications, either apparently from a feeling of loneliness which makes them seek to associate others in their guilt, or from a feeling of hatred at the sight of virtue which is a protest to their own wickedness, or from pure malignity, which, like the false tongue, loves to speak words that may do hurt, and loves lies more than righteousness. But there are, short of this extreme development, some ugly forms of selfishness which a Christian ought to cast on one side as unworthy of his high profession. Here are two men who call themselves rivals, they are engaged in the same pursuits, and follow out for the most part the same interests; they dwell on the two banks of the river of this life as it passes by them; the same stream washes the property of each, bringing the same advantages and the same opportunities. But now it seems to change its course, some storm disturbs it, some barrier deflects it, it rounds a corner, or shifts a boundary, or seems to give one an unfair advantage over the other. The stream of popularity shifts, or the tide of favor turns to one side, or advantage comes to one and not to the other; and bickering and disputes embitter the lives of those who before God and before men are neighbors, and whom a policy of give and take would mutually benefit. Look at the mournful page which lies open under the head of jealousy. The arms of those who should be united against the common foe are turned against each other, and the work of God languishes.

How many homes are being made unhappy, because one or more members choose to ignore every

one's rights but their own. Look at the selfish man, who can think only of his own desires and his own work, who has not a word of love or tenderness to bestow on those who have been making for him that atmosphere of home and comfort, which he demands as a right, and any defect in which he would indignantly resent. Look at the selfishness of the man of pleasure, who spends all he possibly can get on himself, who never gives anything but the smallest coin in church, who helps no societies which are laboring for the welfare of their fellow-creatures, who disposes of mission work with an epigram, and dismisses the Church with a sarcasm, who is fenced round with reasons why he should never give, who is ready with arguments why he should always receive. There is nothing like selfishness to ruin communities, to wreck enterprises, to hamper the Church, to make families unhappy, and life unworthy and unfruitful.

Neither can we stop here. God, in His providence, as we have seen, puts His children into circumstances of difficulty and associates them with those from whom they would fain be released. How difficult it is to avoid a harsh censoriousness which breaks the bruised reed, and quenches the smoking flax.

It is a beautiful saying of the great Saint Ignatius: "Bear all, put up with all, even as God bear-eth with thee."

My brethren, Christ does not want us to struggle to heaven alone. Remember that Creed which begins with "I" loses itself in the "Holy Catholic

Church" and "the Communion of Saints." You have duties toward those with whom God has associated you; do not selfishly keep your religion to yourself, but make it easier to be good for those who have not got your faith. Do not shut off your religious life into Sunday, or think only of your own salvation, but whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. There are husbands and wives who have grown old together, who have learned each from each that which has rounded and finished their faith. Sons like St. Augustine sit with mothers like Monica, and gaze out upon the wonders of God, and compose their hearts with mutual love. Many a man would have been dumb without his chronicler, or would have fallen down faint in battle without his armor-bearer. To have helped another to live, to have enabled another to speak, to have lifted another out of the dust, or shielded him from the storm, this would be to follow the guidance of Him who, when sending out the apostles into the world, sent them out two by two.

XVI.

Third Week—Saturday—the Sixteenth Day of Lent.

No One Else can do Our Duty.¹

“Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.”—ST. JAMES i. 22.

THE fault which St. James here condemns was not irreligion or indifference. It was not acting a part or trying to deceive others. What was it then? *It was in not living up to what they were taught.* Performance lagged behind knowledge. They knew their duty, but did it not. The* practical summing up of Christian life in all its contacts with the world is Duty. We are to do our duty irrespective of our inclinations, to go straight to the mark. Let me ask you to consider one or two things which may help some of us to do our duty better, and help us to overcome our weaknesses and our temptations.

First, *we ought each of us to have a proper idea of the importance of our work.* I do not mean its importance to our own selves only. There is no one who is not quite able to see when it is pointed out to him, that he is a part of a whole—a part of a connected whole. His life is not like a grain of sand on a shore. Other lives have preceded his,

¹ From a sermon by Archbishop Benson, delivered when he was master of Wellington College, England.

other lives are bound up in his; his conduct and character are acting upon others; those who are interested in him, who love him, who are friends with him, work with him, play with him, idle with him, or—far better things perhaps which I need not name—each of those who are connected with him, are connected with them too, and influence them. And this is the way that human life goes on—not as I said like grains of sand, but like meshes in a fabric, each one mesh touching and holding in his place four or five, and each of those four or five others. So that if we may say so, the world's life may be compared to a coat of chain armor, and every one of us is a mesh or link in it. Well, now you know that, if the least mesh or link breaks, it sets loose four or five others, and these four or five others all lack the support they ought to have on that one side, and throw an undue weight on each of the meshes they hang upon; and then comes some stress on that particular point, or else a general stretching of the whole; one link fails, and others cannot take the additional strain, and then there is an opening for a wound, or a general tearing. The safety is gone, and that is what comes of an unfaithful, failing link. In the same way a society may be imperiled by the failure in duty of one member.

I beg you therefore to consider the importance of your own life—the importance of your own work, of your own conduct, not as affecting your future, but just because you are placed by God to be a member of a family, of a school, of a neigh-

borhood, of a nation, of a Church—an importance which belongs to you, as soon as ever you are a member of any of these, and grows in importance, as you grow in age and in power.

Second, there is another way in which you may see how important it is that you should fulfil your duty rightly. *God Himself, working through many means, gave you your position and your being.* Does God concern Himself with unimportant things? Has He set in movement all the chains of circumstances which brought you where you are, for nothing? It is not as if He had just thrown you, you know not how, in a desert land. You could not be where you are, but for endless combinations which our convictions fasten on, as having been made in God's providence for you. They are brought to bear on you from distant times and places. Can it be of little moment how you use what God has thus marvelously arranged? Naturalists have shown us the extraordinary import which attaches to any simple plant, or animal, or insect; how its existence affects that of another, and so that of a third, the through that many more, so that there is not the most insignificant creature which has not its peculiar function to fulfil in the arrangement of physical nature. It is exactly what our Lord taught us; "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father;" and you—"you are of more value than many sparrows," for "even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

Think, then, that God calls us to fill a specially appointed place, to do some duty and work in life

which no one else could do, because no one else is set to do it, as a part of God's plan,—which will go unfulfilled if we are unfaithful.

Consider too that, if this be so, there can be no ground for the complaint which we hear sometimes that we are not equal to that which is given us to do—that therefore others may be called to noble life, but we are overmuch hindered in ours.

It is not so. God who gave the place and gave the work, calculated also the powers which were given to do it; and if we will realize that, we shall find we have energy for what He requires. We shall find no time left for trifling, and we shall find no room for discontent.

XVII.

Fourth Week—Monday—the Seventeenth Day of Lent.

The Soul's Need and God's Nature.¹

“My soul is athirst for God.”—Ps. xlii. 2.

THE longing of my better self is to be delivered from sin. Who can do it? Who can free me from worldliness and evil temper and evil desire? Who can deliver me from sin?

I open the pages of the gospel story, and straight I come across Jesus Christ. A startling figure! An unrivaled picture! An unexampled life! None other like that in history. What is this Jesus Christ? “The Representative of humanity,” say the half believer and the true believer alike. Yes, it is true. Go to Nazareth: what do you find? That hidden life, that sweet humility, that patient labor. The hills encircle Nazareth. Along the slope and in the valley sleeps the little town. The sea spreads out beyond in splendor. The sun shines gloriously above those mountain peaks, once almost the scene, prematurely, of the Passion. In that still spot for thirty years He lived. Man’s greatness is in a life of love and goodness hidden with God. Yes, “the Representative of

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. W. J. Knox Little, of England.

humanity." Go to Samaria, to Galilee, to the Lake shore ; see His work, the toil of His poverty ; those Judæan waysides, those dusty roads, those sun-smitten plains ; and then the "contradiction of sinners against Himself," those crowded gatherings, those unbelieving Pharisees ; those cynical, critical Sadducees ; those blind Jews in the synagogues who refused Him ; their carping, arguing trickinesses, pettinesses, jealousies, and plots. And He ! He never, never varied in that heavenly teaching ; never, never changed in that unspeakable compassion ; never, never faltered in that unshaken faithfulness ; never failed a hair's breadth in that sublime example ; never flagged a moment in that unutterable love.

"Representative of humanity" ? Yes. Go to Calvary. Every sin-smitten, heart-broken, sorrow-laden creature believing in Jesus knows Calvary. Every miserable one with burning brow, in palpitating pain, believing in Jesus, knows Calvary. Survey the tragedy of the Passion. And in every stage, in every scene, *this*—if you have eye to see, you see it—*this* is true. He is "the Representative of humanity."

Well, I am sorely needing a friend to meet the wants of my humanity, my individuality ; that is, alas ! my sin. Does the Father in heaven deliver me from *that* ? I may hope, suspect it, but I need to know. No human eye has ever seen *Him*. No hand has ever touched. No head has dared to lie upon that breast. Can He be revealed to me, as I need such revelation ? Can my want be met, my

individual sin pardoned, cleansed? One only has ever attempted to answer that. But He has answered it in no uncertain accents. He? It is Jesus Christ.

One of the greatest living thinkers told me an anecdote, and to-night I tell it you. It illustrates this truth. Charles Lamb—so he told me—had met some friends to talk on literary topics. They were engaged in discussing what would be the probable effect upon themselves, and their demeanor, effect of joy, of surprise, of teaching, if they could only once speak mouth to mouth with the great, the wonderful dead; and one imagined the approach of one, and another of another. Then followed something of this sort. “Think,” said one, “if Dante were to enter the room, what should we do? How should we meet the man who had trodden the fiery pavement of the Inferno, whose eyes had pierced the twilight, and breathed the still clear air of the mount of the Purgatorio, whose mind had contemplated the mysteries of glory in the highest heaven?” “Or suppose Shakespeare were to come,” another said—you know how Lamb loved Shakespeare—“Ah,” he joined in, his whole face brightening, “How we should rise to meet him! How I should fling my arms up! How we should welcome *him*—that king of thoughtful men!” “And suppose,” said another, “Christ were to enter.” The whole face and attitude, so my informant told me, of Charles Lamb was in an instant changed. “Of course,” he said, in a tone of deep solemnity, “*of course* we should fall upon our

knees." My brothers, will you care to fall upon your knees to one who is *merely* a "Representative of humanity"? I think you will rise to receive Him, I think you will hold out your hands and welcome Him; but you fall upon your knees,—and *of course* you would, if Christ were to enter—you do it because your "soul is athirst for God—for *the living God*"—and He is there.

One further phase of desire for a moment I proceed to mark. We desire forgiveness; we have it is the Cross of Christ. But surely there is within us a yearning that the life of Christ may be ours. We want to know the Father as Christ revealed Him when He lived in this low world. We want to love the Father as Christ loved Him—to love Him by loving Jesus Christ—we want the life of Christ to permeate our own. What is this longing? It is the ambition to be better, the desire toward the ideal, the cry for holiness. Is there a power to answer to that cry? Is holiness, is the achievement of a higher, better, nobler life possible to man? The world smiles and says, "infatuation"; our sloth or our despondency reëcho, "Alas! it may not be; we cannot conquer sin." My brother, believe it not; you *can*. Not indeed alone, but there *is* a power answering your need. "No man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost." Christ may be amongst us, in us, by the work of the Holy Ghost.

If you are like Jesus Christ, your life is worth the living. And if He be, as He is, "the Representative Man," then, O man! you and I should

strive to be like Him. Day by day we should be growing toward conformity to that likeness, "carrying in our hearts the image of Jesus crucified," understanding that not physical prowess, nor mental power, but only self-sacrificing love, is that which makes the creature morally akin to the Creator. Nay more. Not *understanding* only, but gaining in your own soul the power of the fact. How can you gain it? How know it? Where learn it? Could I teach it you by ten thousand words? Could the most practiced subtlety unfold it? Can the richest stores of thought accumulated in the modern world supply it? No. The power is from above. Breathe, O breathe, Blessed Spirit upon the fainting souls of men! Breathe, O breathe, on our dead respectability! Breathe, O breathe, on our chilling worldliness! Breathe, O breathe, upon our cold religionism! Spirit of God, Thou who didst meet us and possess us at the font of Baptism, meet us when we work, meet us when we pray, meet us when we take the sacrament, prepare us, support us, unite us to the incarnate life of Jesus!

XVIII.

Fourth Week—Tuesday—the Eighteenth Day of Lent.

How We are Trained by the Church.¹

“As he reasoned of Righteousness.”—ACTS xxiv. 25.

WE are placed in the Christian Church to be trained in righteousness. We are taught there what is Truth and we are brought under the sway of Grace. Let us consider what are some of the training ideas of the Christian Church which lead us to righteousness.

1. *The first is the idea of Sin.* Sin is, of course, a fact too patent in some form or other to be denied, but too likely in man's untrained condition to be ignored or misinterpreted. The terrible evil which darkens and saddens human life, which lowers the highest yearnings, and darkens the fairest desires, has indeed been felt by all. When the Christian Apostle expressed the sad and common experience,—“To will is present with me, but how to do, I find not,” he knew, like others, the existence of an evil tendency of will, but he knew also, that its seriousness and danger consisted in his relation to his Creator, that this fatal evil was a missing of the mark of human existence, a failing in the object of life, a wasting, therefore, of

¹ From a sermon by Rev. W. J. Knox Little, of Manchester, England.

strength and power in being and in affection, that the Psalmist's exclamation touched the point of danger, "Against *thee*, *thee* only, have I sinned." For the object of the soul is no mere notion of human perfection,—some ideal state of endurance and self-restraint;—no, if that were all, sin would be a state only of inferior education as contrasted with complete attainment; and trouble and pain would really be worse than sin. As it is, life is full of trial and sorrow and pain; but to commit sin is the worst of miseries, as well as the most disastrous of mistakes.

2. *The second educating idea of the Christian Church is the Person and Character of God.* Man is a person; and his personal life leads him to expect a personal Creator. The Christian Church assures him his expectation is correct. More, the character of that God she puts before him as a training idea. That character is one of moral and spiritual purity and beauty, which is expressed by the term—Holiness. All men have felt, and Christians with them, a yearning for an ideal perfection. The Christian Church teaches man that his yearning corresponded to a truth. How strong has been that yearning, what an awful sense it has unfolded of the great reality!

I remember one hot, bright day in the later spring, now many years ago, having entered a sculptor's studio in Milan. There was an artist busy within. He seemed to be young, and earnest at his work. Pale cheeks, sunken eyes flaming out from his white brow,—whiter for its crown of

black and bushy hair,—seemed to tell of a frame too weak for the life within it, of a body consumed by the fire of an intense nature. He was engaged upon a copy of one of the great masters. He was working at the head of a Christ. I looked at him silently, for who was I to interrupt his work or volunteer an opinion? At last he broke the silence, as he turned upon me with feverish impatience, "Speak to me, sir," he said; "say something; is it like, is it ever so little like?"

Ah! feverish heart, what an image of our higher nature we are yearning when at our best, toward the ideal. The Church of our Master has given us the statute that we may more closely copy it, has given us help in the copying; and the soul, as the years are advancing, is humbly longing, "Let it be like, only let it be ever so little like."

3. *To meet this the Church presents the third educating idea, the need and the fact of a Redeemer.* Ages of education prepared for Him; patriarch gazed through darkness, prophets prophesied, psalmists sang; solemn rites revealed the truth in deep and mystic symbolism; hope flagged and then revived, then almost died away. God's ways are slow and patient. At last He came. Came in deep humility. Came in wonderful love. Came, the one, the only one, to meet the need of man. Man's moral need was this, he required help from one having the perfection of his own nature, fit to be at once his representative and his ideal. He required, therefore, one of a character so complete, so faultless, that in it should be no flaw, and so many-

sided, so universal, that it could meet and touch each member of the race in every country, every time. One, only one, has ever dared to claim to do it ; and His claim was calmly and unflinchingly advanced when He lived on earth, and has been maintained, without a shade of hesitation, by Christians ever since. He alone, of all men, ventured to assert His sinlessness, and His enemies and contemporaries did not venture to contradict Him ; He at this moment is cherished in the hearts of thousands, of millions, in every particular different from one another, in language, manner, tradition, nationality, even details of religious belief and practice, but alike in this, that they love and worship Jesus Christ.

But man had also a spiritual need deeper than any mere man could meet : he needed God. "God with us" is the language of prophecy ; it is also the cry of the human heart. How "with us," and this terrible fact of sin so clear ? How "with us," and this awful vision of holiness so plain ? Man's heart and the Christian Church alike have answered ; the one by a vague sense, a vague desire, an indistinct representation ; the other by a definite statement of an awful fact. "With us" by the mystery of atonement for sin ; God, meeting the mysterious but real fact, by a mysterious but real power,—that is the announcement of a Redeemer. Nothing short of God's help will suffice. Oh weary heartaches, oh deep, mysterious, intricate, inexplicable troubles, where, where, can we find relief for them, except in the loving heart, the bleeding heart of God ?

XIX.

Fourth Week—Wednesday—the Nineteenth Day of Lent.

Agencies for the Soul's Training.¹

“Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.”—Ps. xxv. 1.

THE Christian Church employs agencies for the training of the soul. The first of these is *Worship*. To worship is to concentrate mind, will and affection in homage before God. On God we depend, from God we come, to God we go. All we have is His, committed to us to use according to our Master's expressed desire. All we are is the outcome of His bounty and generous gift, except the sin which defaces the image of Himself in the soul. To worship is to acknowledge the truth, and therefore, since truth is the food of the understanding, to satisfy one of the needs of our being. More; man's perfection and happiness is God's glory, that is, it is the full expression, in the life of His creature, of the ultimate meaning of His wisdom, goodness, and truth. Man's final satisfaction will be the rapture of the beatific vision; all true worship is the anticipation of that perfection; it is therefore the “giving glory to God.”

1. *Worship may be expressed in song or in rapt*

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. W. J. Knox Little, of Manchester, England.

and concentrated silence, in voiceless homage or in the splendid ritual of an adoring Church, by the rapid chant of stately psalms, by the fair symbols of frescoed angels, by the upturned eye, or the uplifted voice, but these are the expression of the attitude of hearts in grace ; they are the looks and accents of the Bride in her love for the Bridegroom.

External acts of worship have been ever practiced by the Church, because they are revealed and taught by God. To disregard them is a serious fault, not only because it indicates a disobedient and wilful temper, but also because it assists to destroy the worship of the heart. Not to unite in *acts* of worship, or not to practice postures of devotion, is, alas ! soon to lose altogether the *thing* of which these are the signs. *A religion which forgets worship soon forgets God and cripples spiritual growth in man.* At best it thinks most of comfort and of self-improvement, not of God's glory, and in temper sinks into recognition of natural virtues, and ignores or denies the need of the high graces of supernatural spiritual life. And as man worships, so, by the law of assimilation, he grows in likeness to the immortal beauty. Simply to adore God is to be ennobled. In an age of such feverish activity and morbid desire of movement, we do well to remember that to place ourselves with the hosts of the angels, stricken with the holiness and awfulness of the vision of God, to forget self in the presence of the Lamb "as it had been slain," by whom and in whom alone we can worship, to gaze and adore the splendor and goodness of the Eternal, is at once to give God the

glory we owe to Him, and ourselves to grow in righteousness.

2. *The second agency of the Church is prayer.* Prayer is indeed an instinct of the soul. But we learn in Christianity its meaning, its duty, and its blessing; we learn that it is the Holy Spirit of God who enables, as it is the merits of the Redeemer which give efficacy to, our prayers. We learn that there is a special virtue in the union of souls in prayer, that whatever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive, if it be according to His will; and with this we may well be content, for we can desire nothing really contrary to that blessed Will, which is the highest law of the universe, and must be the law of our being if our end is blessedness; that no faithful prayer is ever lost; that by prayer we ascend and hold communion with the Eternal, "whom to know is eternal life;" that out of prayer comes what most we need in the path of our pilgrimage—consolation and strength. And it is our faith, that the prayers of His people are a part of the agencies by which God carries on His government of the world. This is all, of course, abundantly contradicted, as every other truth is, by the flippancy or blindness of unbelief. That there are difficulties to reason in this as in other points of revelation, no Christian is at pains to deny. He knows his reason is finite and God infinite, he knows in his religion he is dealing with mysteries, he is only astounded by the folly of those who fancy they can measure and criticise the infinite counsels of God. But of the point before us the Christian is

abundantly confident. Prayer sustains in a higher atmosphere a soul which would otherwise flag and fall ; it educates (and that not merely by its subjective effect, but by the power given to its urgency) —it educates in righteousness. Prayer has brought comfort and strength. That where there has been faithful fulfilment of the conditions laid down by Christ, it unfailingly does so in the long run ; it has been the experience of many, that even amid outer trials, a life of prayer has been blessed with a sense of interior trust, entire resignation, abundance of peace ; it has been the experience of numbers of the greatest and best whom the world has ever known, that new forces have possessed the soul, that unexpected blessings have been received in the life, at times when they persisted in prayer. Without it the soul is dull, earthly, sickly, at last dead ; with it, a soul is subjected to a powerful supernatural agency for training in righteousness.

3. But no ascension of the soul to God is sufficient. *There is also the mystery of the sacramental agency, whereby God descends to the soul.* I say, rightly, “God descends.” For, indeed, every life-giving, life-sustaining power is only a conveyance to us of some virtue of the Self-existent. God is the self-sufficing, self-possessing Life, the fountain of all being ; and, as in natural life He uses instruments, so in spiritual things, in dealing with His creature, who is at once a spirit and a body, He has revealed to us that He uses sacramental veils and instruments, whereby to convey the sustaining strength of spiritual life. The sacraments of the

Church have their proper scope, and they in some degree or manner convey to the soul the life-giving life of the second Adam, whereby is applied, because in it dwells, the righteousness of God.

The education of righteousness, indeed, comes to this, it is the growth of the soul into ever closer union with Jesus Christ. It is the one thing valuable in interior life, this advance in righteousness,—that is, this closer contact with “the Lord our righteousness.” All the teachings, all the agencies of the Church are concentrated on effecting this in the soul.

And perfect righteousness,—the “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord,”—is the final crown of a completed character. Even here the saints have had a foretaste of that blessedness, which is the consequence of perfection of the soul in Him, and which is the certain reward of those who, by grace, persevere. As the wanderer toils up the rough paths of the Great St. Bernard, he sees on either side the signs of desolation, and above him the crests of eternal snow. From point to point fair glimpses of distant valleys open for a moment, and then are screened by the envious cliffs; the storm wraps the rocks in darkness in the autumn night, and blinds the traveler with the driving snow; even in the summer evening, only sparse shreds of golden sunlight wander tearfully, as if trespassers, in the crannies of the clefts; but a church bell here and there rings out the Angelus, and reminds him of a better hope, and of another world. He climbs the crest, and soon below him

lies another landscape under a fairer heaven. Instead of toil, and struggling labor, rough rock and roaring torrent, lo! the calm, soft sunshine, bright skies and fair valleys of Italy. Christ's pilgrim wanders on; he has stray lights, and sounds of music from another world; but a soul *does* grow with persevering faithfulness to grace; there is "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,"—foretaste of the land of peace, beyond the gateways of the day.

And now, my brothers, what is your life? Simply an opportunity for that training for another world. A being who is enabled fully, awfully, to recognize the greatness of the claims of God, to have his spiritual vision cleared by an ideal picture of what he is meant to be, who is placed within reach of power of pardon, and forces of growth,—such is the Christian in the Church of the Redeemer, educated in righteousness. Standing as you are, O brother man! on the brink of eternity, remember that all temporal success, all outward triumph, all self-satisfying display, all that can be gained merely by toil of brain or hand, or given by the favor of admirers or patrons in a passing world,—all is as nothing compared with that growth in inward conformity to God's image, which is the due condition of the creature's being here, the fitting result of his supernatural training, and which, in the Church of the Redeemer, is possible for man.

XX.

Fourth Week—Thursday—the Twentieth Day of Lent.

Who are the Good and Who are the Bad?¹

“The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all die; and that He died for all, that they which live should henceforth live not unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.”—2 COR. v. 14, 15.

THE Bible seems continually to divide people into two classes, the good and the bad, and to anticipate a sharper division finally—sheep on the right hand and goats on the left. But we feel sometimes, with this sharp division in our minds when we contemplate the facts of actual life, that they are in marked contradiction.

There are a few exceptionally good people; a few people exceptionally bad; but the great multitude of men present, we feel, as we contemplate them, a very mixed appearance; nay more, as experience grows, we seem continually to be disappointed by some meanness or sensuality or selfishness or worldliness appearing in those we thought well of, and some unexpected trait of goodness in those of whom we thought the worst things. More and more the world assumes an air of drab monot-

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. Charles Gore, M. A., Canon of Westminster, London, England.

ony, of mixed vice and virtue; and what, we ask, has come of this marked division which the Bible continually presses upon us, between the good and the bad? And yet, on reflection, it occurs to us that after all the concrete character which the pages of Scripture present to us are of this mixed character which our experience suggests—Esau and Jacob, Saul and David, Pilate and Peter. These are mixed characters which confront us in common life. But yet in its moral analysis the Bible sunders them, and puts one on the one side and the other on the other, and again we ask ourselves, *What is the meaning of this division, which appears in so many respects to contradict our experience?* And the answer is, I suppose, a twofold one. It is this—first, that the Bible judges men, and would have us judge them, not so much by what they are as by the tendency of their life, by the direction of its moral movement. Of course we recognize it. The true way to judge anything is by the direction,—the movement that is in it, which, produced infinitely, will carry it very far indeed from its present ground. Thus, Esau is worse than Jacob, because though Esau had many elements of nobility and the other many elements of trickery and meanness, yet the latter grows in a certain steady direction. Jacob represents typically the old Jewish people. He grows in a certain moral direction; he produces fruit, and Esau, for all the elements of generosity in his character, grows in a direction which produces nothing, accomplishes nothing, redeems nothing, leads to nothing.

We are to judge of things by their tendencies, and when, turning from the outward aspect of man with all its mixed appearance, we look into the tribunal of our own conscience we are amazed to see how, when we look at moral action from within, this teaching of the Bible is justified to our minds. It may be a small thing—one of those things which makes no very great difference in our general estimate of a man, a small sin, or defect of character into which we have been betrayed. We have told, let us suppose, a somewhat ill-natured story about some one in general society. Look at that act, however, from within. What was it? We were feeling somewhat at a loss for matter of conversation when we were dining with a friend, and the story came into our memory, and we knew it would raise a laugh, and we knew also that it was ill-natured, and yet in a moment or two we had told it. It is a small act, but to our moral conscience it is not small. We knew, if we were honest with ourselves, that what happened then was simply that we took the bad instead of the good. It is no comfort to us that it was not something worse. At the moment, the alternative before us was to do right or wrong, and we chose for our convenience to do wrong. Life is made up of acts like that, a continual choosing of the right or a continual choosing of the wrong, and the acts repeated in one direction stereotype the character; they harden it; they produce a definite and almost fixed tendency, and so in human life—the Bible after all being justified—that is continually going on.

People who have natural faults and natural virtues, who, in the outward circumstances of life are keeping close together, are all along, by repeated acts of the inner will, moving in a direction toward goodness or toward badness, which at some sudden crisis which breaks down the barriers of habitual circumstance may show them to be all the time infinitely better or infinitely worse than under ordinary circumstances we had imagined them to be. The Bible, then, takes men as better or worse than they seem, divides us into two classes, bad or good, because of the inner tendency or moral direction in which our lives are moving.

But yet there is another part of the answer to the question, Why thus the Bible divides us into good or bad? It is not merely satisfied with pointing out the tendency of our lives; *it points also to the cause of the tendency.* What produces the tendency toward good is, at the bottom of all things, the Bible says, Religion, or the absence of that tendency, the absence of religion. What do I mean by religion? I mean that which is in fact the signification of the word in its origin. Religion means a bond—binding, a bond by which a human being is bound or obliged to some Superior Unseen Divine Being. That, in its etymology, is the meaning of the word, and therein lies the fulness of its significance; that is, to be religious is to be under conscious obligation to some unseen Divine Being. Look at it in the pages of the Old Testament. Ask again why Jacob is better than Esau. It is because in spite of all the natural generosity which lies in

the character of Esau he was a profane person—that is, one who recognizes little or no obligation to God—and, therefore, there is in his character no tendency toward moral truth, no fixity of principle, no moral movement. Jacob represents, on the other hand, with all his faults, the very spirit of religion—that is, the recognition of his moral obligation to the God of his fathers—and because he knows God, because he cannot forget the obligation by which he is bound to God, therefore gradually and after a lapse of time, on him and on his children the character of the God he worshipped is inevitably impressed. Religion—that makes the difference.

I say, then, if you ask the reason why the Bible tends so to divide men into good or bad, to make us believe that we are better or worse than we appear, or are apt to think one another, the answer is that it looks not to the actual moral level we have attained, but to the moral tendency and direction of our life. And if you ask further how we are to account for this difference of tendency, the answer is that we believe on the whole that that man tends upward who has religion, and that man tends downward who has no religion; and by religion is meant not this or that profession, but the recognition as a moral bond of the sovereignty of God.

And yet, brethren, when we have said and recognized that, it comes into our heart, surely, that here in this very respect is the peculiar and transcendent failure of our generation. In many respects no one can doubt our moral advance. Life is much more amiable, much more kindly disposed, much more

forbearing and considerate than it was. Gentler virtues flourish amongst us than in the generations that have gone before—there is no question about it. But on the other hand is it possible to look around on the classes and society which we know best, and doubt that there is very generally a weakening of that sense of constraint, that sense of obligation to a Higher Power, to God, whether from love or fear? There is a more or less refined selfishness which in different forms we recognize continually in human lives, which owns no master at the last resort but its own convenience. There is a more or less refined and educated æstheticism which will have no restraint but its own taste or sense of what is beautiful. There is an educated or self-conscious scepticism which shakes off the first feeling of pressure in moral obligation by Pilate's question. "What is truth?" I ask you to look around the society you live in, the people you ordinarily talk to, and say what tone of the mind you meet in society, in business. Am I exaggerating when I say that that which is weakening is that sense of positive constraint, that sense of positive obligation, whether of love or fear to a God whom in any case we must recognize? Does religion lay its strong hand on selfishness when selfishness is considering its own convenience? on æstheticism when it is considering its taste? on scepticism when it is shaking off the sense of moral obligation by the appeal to the uncertainty of argument? To be religious is to be under conscious obligation to the unseen Divine Being. Are we thus living?

XXI.

Fourth Week—Friday—the Twenty-first Day of Lent.

How can the Sense of Religion be Strengthened ?¹

“The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and that He died for all, that they which live should henceforth live not unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.”—2 COR. v. 14, 15.

THERE is not in the page of history, there is not in the experience of men anything like the spectacle of the cross and Passion of our Lord, which has such a power to lay upon the soul or to strengthen upon it the sense of religion, that consciousness of obligation and constraint. We watch the Son of Man going to His Passion; we know what it means. He is going because He represents all that in our inmost conscience we know to be best. He had moved out into the world because of the Word of truth, of righteousness. *It was because He was perfected that He went out thus to die.* They, under the circumstances of the time, put Him to death; but what is more important, for it is irrespective of the conditions in their consciences, they rejected Him, and repudiated Him, men, ordinary men, such as we are, only because He did represent these

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. Charles Gore, M. A., Canon of Westminster, London, England.

things which in our best moments we admire. That is true ! You have only to look at the circumstances with more exactitude to see that the classes which repudiated Him represented in their time and under their circumstances the ordinary habitual moral tendencies of men. The Sadducees were not anything more than worldly men like all other worldly men, occupied with a policy, and at the last resort caring for the situation which their policy involved more than abstract justice and truth. "The Romans will come and take our place"—that was the final and sufficient answer to the appeal of justice. These Pharisees were not more than men of ingrained religious prejudice, who had religious reputation to maintain, and who were not prepared to risk their religious reputation and position by beginning to ask themselves over again the first question about religion altogether. And the crowd was not more fickle and shallow than people commonly are who want religion, but not a religion which will give them any moral trouble. And Pilate was not more than ordinarily weak under the strains under which multitudes, aye, even the majority of men are seen to fail. It was the ordinary worldly world, the world which lies round about us in the streets on which we jostle, which is broad and large as human society itself, when it will not put God first. *It was ordinary men, then, who put Christ to death.* He died at the hands of men because He was righteous, and not only at the hands of men, but for men. He moves out into the struggle, into the battle, con-

sciously and deliberately, carrying through for men that ideal which He knows to be the only one by which humanity can finally be saved. He went to die for men knowing that He was representing all that was true in manhood against all that was false. He knew it was a sacrifice, a deliberate sacrifice of Himself for all that is best in manhood. And therefore it is that He laid upon our consciences, our will, a constraint, an allegiance, than which nothing can be stronger, if only we will suffer ourselves steadily for a while to contemplate the meaning of that scene—"The love of Christ constraineth us." Jesus carried that ideal through death into glory ; He lives at the right hand of the Father in the glory of God, but still human. He has sent down His Spirit into our hearts one by one ; that Spirit is moving in our conscience. Now as we look at His cross and passion, their value for us depends upon the deepening of religion in us.

Some of you have at some time or other in your life been visitors to Florence, and in Florence to the convent of San Marco. There, you know in cell after cell there are depicted upon the wall the scenes of the crucifixion of Jesus by the brush of that poet-painter-preacher, Fra Angelico. The painter has seemed to feel that the figure of Jesus crucified was more than he could compass ; he has left it most conventionally treated. All the depth of his power he has put into the figure of St Dominic, who stands at the cross representing the Christian soul in all the various phases of feeling which pass over it, as it contemplates the spectacle of

Jesus crucified. First, there is the mere bewilderment as of one who contemplates a sight shocking and horrible, and he hides his face in horror, as from something disgraceful. You pass into another cell, and the scene is changed. Now he is looking up in questioning bewilderment ; he has not yet taken in the meaning of the scene, but he is sure that there are hidden there depths of misery and truth. You pass to another cell, and now he has understood what it is. He has seen in Jesus One who is suffering for human sin ; he is determined that he will not share those sins, he feels there in a penitence, which is represented by the scourge at the foot of the cross. You pass into another, and now he has found the joy and the repose of that forgiveness which passes out of the loving heart of Christ. He kneels there, he contemplates in ecstasy Jesus who has forgiven him. Once more. Alone he is standing, with his arms outstretched, as one who simply contemplates in admiration the glory of that great love for all the world which beams from the cross. Once more he is kneeling there, kneeling on one knee, as one who had prepared to start up ; he is there half in homage, half in recognition that this cross lays upon his life the allegiance of a great service ; he is grasping it as one who is just leaving for his mission.

Brethren, whatever phases and feelings we pass through, as we contemplate the cross of Christ, this is what it must come to. *The value of the cross for us depends upon the extent to which it creates or deepens in us that one ultimate feeling of religion,*

that obligation, that bond, that allegiance of the human soul to something which, with all its being, it can adore and serve. "Because we thus judge that if one died, then all die." What does it mean ? It means He died for this ordinary world, that this world laid its hand upon Him and put Him to death ; then if we believe that, then never more can we walk at ease in the ways of the world that rejected and crucified Jesus.

He died for all ; therefore, when the meaning of that spectacle has been taken in by our conscience and our heart, we die for the world that crucified Him ; we cannot take part in its ways or be satisfied with its standards, or adapt our consciences to its methods, or let ourselves off because the world lets us off.

I ask you with resolute fearlessness to yield yourselves to the influence, the plain and simple moral influence, which flows down upon the will and heart of any one who will yield himself to contemplate the cross of Jesus, and to take in, as all can take in, the meaning of living in the world which rejected Him and crucified Him. Only look at Jesus of Nazareth, and you cannot fail to see in Him the One who constrains and compels the moral homage of your conscience and will, and it is in giving to Him the moral homage which His human perfection claims that at least you put yourself on the road to a further understanding of His claim and to the nature of it. Only give yourself to take in the meaning of what He professed, of what He suffered, of what He represented—Jesus dead at the

hands of men and for men ; Jesus risen, your King and Master ; Jesus laying on your souls by all the claims of His sacrifice and His suffering a hand of strong mastery, a hand of religion. For to be able to say, "I am Thy servant," to be able to say "In all my weaknesses and in spite of my innumerable faults and temptations I do serve Thee ; the love of Christ constraineth me,"—that is to have impressed and implanted on your conscience and your will a motive and a power which throughout all weaknesses shall continually recover and restore and recall you.

XXII.

Fourth Week—Saturday—the Twenty-second Day of Lent.

A Warning Lest We Lose What We Have.¹

“Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath.”—ST. MATTHEW xxv. 29.

IN whatever direction we turn we find the truth of this saying of our Lord exemplified in some form. From him that hath not is always being taken, even that which he hath; while more is being given to him that hath. It may seem to some an unjust law. Yet it is reiterated several times by Christ and appears to obtain His sanction. Is there, then, any justification for the existence of such conditions? Has this law, if law it be, any moral purpose? Is there any righteous intention actuating it, or hidden behind it? It may help us to approach the answer and to appreciate it more fully if we consider how Nature acts under similar circumstances. The weak are crushed out; the hardy are preserved. The indolent and awkward are deprived of any powers they may have, while the powers of the active and skilful are increased and elaborated. Older and inferior kinds of ani-

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. Lionel J. Wallace, M. A., Vicar of Goring, England.

mals and plants are pressed out of existence by newer and superior kinds. With man similar processes go on. The races which are satisfied to stand still, and will not be taught, disappear. If the individual man is too foolish or indolent to employ any of his faculties, these faculties lose their force ; just as the arm never raised shrinks into impotence, and the brain never seriously exerted forfeits its power of remembering and thinking. On the other hand, the strong, active, and capable become, under the operation of this law, more strong, more active, and more capable. The power used increases in efficiency, and gains new powers for its possessor. The races of men which are earnest to move forward and willing to endure become, as a rule, the dominant races. The man who exerts, within proper limits, body and mind, finds the powers of both grow larger and more reliable.

In consideration of these results do we not begin to find an answer to our question, and to see a justification for conditions which, on a hasty glance, appear so hard ? From him who has little is taken even the little he has ; to him who has much is given more. But why ? Clearly, on the whole, no capricious or reasonless course of treatment is pursued. The first loses, either because he has never made an honest effort, or has never had the skill to make a well-directed effort, to use whatever little he had. Like the slothful servant in the parable, he puts away his talent where it is of no value to himself, or to any one else ; and, so, it is taken from him. The second gains because

he has employed whatever powers he received and, in this measure, has deserved to have those powers and gifts increased. There is, then, a principle of desert involved in the matter. The law, so far, is not without justification, nor is its action needlessly or unreasonably cruel. Even where the action takes place in a purely physical sphere a moral lesson is conveyed. Indolence, wastefulness, apathy are condemned ; industry, wise carefulness, strenuousness, are pronounced good.

But *there is also a judicial aspect.* “Take from him.” “Give to him.” Not only is the moral lesson implied in general, but we find, under this law, the waster and idler punished for a crime, while the worker is rewarded for his merit. The man who cannot, or will not work, must yield to the man who can and will. This is not the community’s decree alone—it is God’s decree as well. For what is that great natural law, the law of the survival of the fittest, but another form of the declaration, “Unto every one that hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath”? The weak, the worthless, the unfruitful animal or plant, is, with apparent ruthlessness, swept away, and its place is given to the capable and fruitful. The unfit has had its chance, but its unfitness having been conclusively proved, it may not be permitted to cumber the ground any longer, but must give place to the fit and profitable.

For the moral world the same law holds good. It may not appear to act in the moral world with

the same undeviating rigor and impartiality that it does in the physical world, but of the fact of its rule there can be little doubt. Even in what is commonly called society, amid much that is invidious and sordid, we can trace a moving under this law, and recognize that often—perhaps in spite of itself—society is exercising a rude kind of justice. That larger world, of which society is an infinitesimal part, must live, if it is to live at all, under the reign of this same law. The world cannot stand still ; it must dwindle and become worse, or it must grow and become better. It is God's will that it should grow, but it cannot grow if it is crowded with the helpless and idle people ; if talents, needful to its growth, lie rusting in the possession of the falsely prudent or incompetent. It can grow and become better only by the exertions of the thinker and the worker, by talents and powers in the hands of the brave and competent. There is no place for the skulker. Possessions—moral, mental or material—are given to be used for the good of the world ; if they are selfishly hoarded, or allowed to lie idle, the right to them is forfeited. They are held by the tenure of service, and from those who cease to serve they ought to be taken, and given to those who will serve.

In *religion* the law obtains. If we are satisfied with a mere lip and knee worship, if the main part of our religion consists in words, if we are too indolent to work our creed into our doing, and to make our lives square with our profession, if we refuse to acknowledge the impulse and prompting of

the spirit, then we are likely to end by losing all true religion. We have had little, yet that little may become much, but, if we are too indolent and careless to try to realize and use our little, we may lose even that little. There is no place for the slothful, feeble, and infirm of purpose. God and the world demand work, and claim that each man use diligently the powers committed to him. If he do this he will find that *every power increases by being used, and that the more a man does and gains the more capable he becomes of doing and gaining.* This will be the faithful servant's immediate reward. Beyond this, a greater reward will await him in the knowledge that through his service the world has grown somewhat better, has risen a little nearer to the ideal to which it should always tend ; and that, through his true work, however limited and restricted it may have been, mankind has become, in some small degree, happier, purer, and holier. In eloquent and forceful words Mr. John Morley urges such considerations as these. "What we can do—the humblest of us—is by diligently using our own minds, and diligently seeking to extend our own opportunities to others, to help to swell that common tide, on the force and set of whose currents depends the prosperous voyaging of humanity. When our names are blotted out, and our place knows us no more, the energy of each social service will remain, and so, too, let us not forget, will each social disservice remain, like the unending stream of one of nature's forces. The thought that this is so may well

lighten the poor perplexities of our daily life, and even soothe the pang of its calamities ; it lifts us from our feet as on wings, opening a larger meaning to our private toil, and a higher purpose to our public endeavor ; it makes the morning as we awake to its welcome, and the evening like a soft garment as it wraps us round ; it nerves our arm with boldness against oppression and injustice, and strengthens our voice with deeper accents against falsehood, while we are yet in the full noon of our days—yes, and, perhaps, it will show some ray of consolation, when our eyes are growing dim to it all, and we go down into the Valley of Darkness.” It will do more. For, while to the slothful servant a dreadful word comes—“Take from him even that which he hath”—and the darkness deepens at the uttering of that word ; in him who has been true and used his talent diligently in the service of God and of mankind, it will so move that he will hear a Voice : “Well done, good and faithful servant ; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” And at that Voice the shadows will roll away, and the Dark Valley be penetrated by the light of God.

XXIII.

Fifth Week—Monday—the Twenty-third Day of Lent.

Prayer is Reasonable.¹

“He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?”—Ps. xciv. 9.

CAN God listen to and answer Prayer? Will God listen to and answer Prayer? Ought God to listen to and answer Prayer? Three points, you notice, are involved—ability, disposition, right.

We are often told that it argues a downright puerility to suppose that God either can or will answer our requests, because Nature is clearly and beyond all question an intricately contrived machine, no more able to alter its motions and change its bearings in compliance with a spoken word or request, than a steam engine or a clock or a loom. This would be an unanswerable argument in favor of fatalism, and against the potency of prayer, were Nature a machine of which we could see the whole, but it is not. There is a background of mystery, a region none of our senses can penetrate, and there, wholly out of sight, lie the beginnings of power. It may be that behind the veil which sunders the seen

¹ From a sermon by Rev. W. R. Huntington, D.D., Rector of Grace Church, New York. From “The Causes of the Soul,” published by E. P. Dutton & Company, New York.

from the unseen, the hand which keeps the wheel-work all in motion, is turned this way rather than that, or that way rather than this, because two or three believing souls have agreed on earth touching some blessing they desire to have, some work they would see done. It may be so, may it not? The Almighty is able to hear, and both able and willing to answer prayer.

There remains the question, *Ought He always and invariably to answer it*, in the sense of never refusing to any petitioner any earnest request? To this a sober-minded faith will assuredly answer, No. Fatherhood involves governance, and governance involves the exercise of judgment, discrimination. The life of a well-ordered family is full of what we may call earthly prayer. The children ask the parents questions of many sorts, and bring to them requests of widely variant character; is it any argument against the efficacy of this which I have called earthly prayer, that some of the questions go unanswered, and not a few of the requests ungranted? No, the father remembers what his responsibility with respect to the whole family is, and certain of the favors the children ask he grants not, because he ought not. And yet, who will deny that in the life of that household the right of petition is a real thing, or that the exercise of it produces real results? So with our Father in heaven and His family on earth. All of our prayers He hears, not one escapes Him. Our adoration He receives, our thanksgivings He graciously accepts, to our confessions He lends an ear of pity, and as for our requests, some He

grants, and some He disallows. Is He the less our Father then for that? No, not the less, the more. Possibly in the clearer light of the heavenly life, should it be granted us to enter there, we shall find ourselves thanking Him with greater fervency for withholding our heart's desire, than we could possibly have thanked Him for conceding it.

Moreover, God forbid that we should confine our definition of prayer to the men begging for favors. *Prayer is more than petition. It is communion, intercourse, exchange of confidences.*

It is written of Moses, the man of God, that the Lord spake unto him face to face, "as a man speaketh to his friend." What more beautiful picture of heaven brought down to earth, could be imagined? The confiding to God the whole story of our troubles, of our disappointments, of our failures, of our well-meant endeavors, and last, not least, of our sins,—is there nothing of value in all this that we should leave it wholly out of view in estimating the efficacy of prayer?

Or again, think of *how much a grateful heart has to tell*. Is it nothing that the soul should have the opportunity given her to pour out before her Maker a glad offering of thanks? Is it nothing that the joy which Nature, in her more genial moods, sometimes inspires in us should be able to find expression in acts of heartfelt adoration to Him whom even Nature herself blindly worships? Is it nothing that all the kindly affections and associations of our homes can be lifted up and carried on the lips of household prayer until they come into the presence

of the Father of all the families of the earth and taste the preciousness of His blessing?

Are all these phases of prayer, all these modes of speaking with God, to be carelessly set aside as of no particular value, while the whole question is made one of mendicancy, and we are asked to measure the advantages according to the arithmetic by which a street beggar reckons up his gains at sunset.

Intercourse with a character richer and better than our own is commonly held to be a great privilege. We can all of us recall friends to whom we have, as we say, owed a great deal on the score of helpful influence. But is it supposable that God has permitted personal intercourse between man and man to be such a potent instrument in the building up of character, and yet has made all intercourse with Himself impossible? If the spirit of man can, through the power of influence and sympathy, bless and uplift the spirit of his fellow-man, much more, a thousandfold more, shall God, who, be it remembered, is a Spirit also, aid by intercourse and influence the creature spirit whom He permits to call himself His child. Wherefore, my brethren, let us pray.

XXIV.

Fifth Week—Tuesday—the Twenty-fourth Day of Lent.

Prayer is not Contrary to Nature.¹

WHAT is the use of Prayer after all? is there any good in prayer? Is there any reality in it? Are we indeed speaking into the ear of God, or simply articulating into the air? Does the Lord Almighty hear our prayer, and will He answer? Or are we simply repeating and mumbling pious words and phrases because we have been taught to do so, whose only response is their echo, and not even that?

There are tendencies which seem to militate against the reality of prayer. Most of them might be summarized in some such statement or objection as this: Nature being uniform in its working, effect following cause there with an unerring regularity of sequence and occurrence, prayer is an exercise contrary to the law of nature. But that, it seems to me, is exactly what it is not. Prayer contrary to the laws of nature? What nature? Whose nature? It is not contrary to my nature.

¹ From a chapter in "The Preacher and His Place," a volume of addresses by the Rev. David H. Greer, D. D., Rector of St. Bartholomew's Church, New York. Copyright 1895, and Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.

It is not contrary to your nature. *It is not contrary to human nature in general, for in all ages men have prayed*; and, judging the future by the past, as long as human nature remains human nature they will continue to pray. It is the one thing, indeed, which everywhere we see, which everywhere we hear,—prayer: in all lands, among all peoples, in all conditions of life, among all sorts of men, in all the past we hear it. In the song of the Parsee priest on the top of the Persian mountains; in the sound of the Mussulman's cry, breaking forth with the sunrise from the turret stone of the mosque; in Mohammedanism; in Buddhism; in Zoroasterism; in the monotheism of the Jew; in the militarism of the Roman; in the fetichism of the African,—the voice of prayer is heard. And the spirit of prayer is felt breathing through the hymns to Indra and Varuna, as well as through the Psalms of David to Jehovah.

What is the story of human life in the past but the story of religion? And if of religion, then of prayer. It is the story of human life trying to come to itself through a power outside of itself; and to somehow tell itself, its deepest, inmost, secretest self, into the listening ear of some sympathetic God. And not only in the story of the past do we hear it, in the story of the present we hear it. The voice of prayer is heard in all the lands to-day; among all the people to-day; not only among the people who call themselves religious, but among the people who do not call themselves religious, who yet, in spite of them-

selves, are a little religious at times. They cannot keep God out of their thought. They cannot keep God out of their speech. The instinct of God is in them, and they cannot get rid of it. And that instinct of God which is in them carries with it the instinct to appeal at times to God. And they do appeal to God ; not always reverently, sometimes profanely, using His name as a name with which to curse and swear. But what is cursing and swearing but the instinct in them of prayer, of appeal to God, gone mad, because *they* have gone mad and angry for a moment ; the instinct in them of prayer blasphemously expressed. It is an irrepressible, an ineradicable instinct. It shows itself in wrath, in anger, in love, in fear, in danger, in death, in the sudden escape from danger, in the sudden exemption from death, when involuntarily they are moved to say and can't help saying, "Thank God !" as though, somehow, He did it, and they feel and know He did it. Or, when touched with some emotion beyond the common want, of gladness or of joy, which they know not how to express or how to others to tell it, or how with others to share it, the heart goes up to God as though it would share it with Him, and would say to Him, "Oh, see, as no one else can see, my gladness and my joy !" Or when in some hour of need, confronting some difficult or perilous task which they have not strength or energy to perform, and yet which they must perform, without any human guidance and without any human aid, treading the winepress all alone in darkness and in weariness, with none to help or

understand, or bring deliverance to them, and the cry goes up to God for help, and the appeal to God is made !

Prayer contrary to the laws of nature ? Why *it is a law of nature, of human nature at least*, which lives, and breathes, and moves, and has its being in prayer ; which is forever, reverently or irreverently, sacredly or profanely, silently or vocally, somehow appealing to God ; swearing in His name, protesting in His name, testifying in His name, deprecating, imprecating, expostulating in His name ; forever carrying up its great case in equity to God as unto its highest and ultimate Court.

Contrary to the laws of nature ? Why, *more than anything else it is our nature*. It ripples through all our laughter, which is in its last analysis but the breaking forth for a moment of the imprisoned spirit trying to reach and touch the glad surprise of some unknown life. It ripples through all our laughter, it shines through all our tears ; it shows itself in our weaknesses, makes stronger our strengths, and quickens within us the dream of some ideal life, not seen as yet, but believed in, toward which we now press on, toward which we now aspire as the home of the soul in God. In human nature, at least, I say, there is no other law so imperiously dominant, so supremely transcendent, so universally prevalent as the instinct in us of prayer ; and we can no more get rid of it than human nature can get rid of human nature.

And upon that world of human nature, which is said to have come out of all the rest of nature, to be its blossomed outgrowth,—upon that world of human nature, with the instinct in it of prayer, we take our stand and pray, and leave results to Him who is greater and wiser than we, and who has made it a law of our being, a law of nature, to pray.

I want you to feel how right, how reasonable, is prayer; and that you are not turning away from the light of nature as modern knowledge reveals it to you when you turn toward the light of Christ. I would deepen in you the conviction that it is only by the opening up of your heart and soul, not only toward the human, but toward the divine environment of your lives, that you can reach the full stature of your personal development and make the most of yourselves. Let God make you strong, and then you are strong with a strength that will prove itself so often to be an invincible strength, and which opposition and difficulty will only more fully bring out. .

XXV.

Fifth Week—Wednesday—the Twenty-fifth Day of Lent.

Idleness.¹

“And about the eleventh hour He went out and found others idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto Him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive.”
—ST. MATTHEW xx. 6, 7.

OUR parable carries us from the industrial to the spiritual market. It is the work of the Kingdom of God of which it speaks; and it is there that the parable asks, “Why idle?” It is idleness that seems so strange. Idleness, mere unmitigated slackness, is the inexplicable thing. It defeats the very motive with which man exists at all. It makes mock of God’s effort in creating him. The man is there with all his capacities, and yet might just as well not be there at all. His sum of powers counts for nothing. He is a negation, a waste. There is nothing to be made of it.

How can a man remain all the day idle when the work of God’s vineyard goes forward so keenly?

Life is intended, as we say, for probation, it tests a man’s worth, it estimates his value, it sets

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. H. Scott Holland, M. A., Canon of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, England.

a hall-mark on his power, it weighs and measures his force of character, it allots him his place among his fellows. But all this can only be done if he will submit himself to some strain upon will and skill. Without this there is no evidence to go upon as to what he is or what he can achieve. He must have some fair task set him, or else he is never sifted, never qualified, never brought to trial. This is the curse of idleness—that it wrecks the primary intention with which a man is alive, and robs life of its purpose. The man who has no real work has missed his mark as a man, and that is why it is so melancholy to look round to-day and see the swarms of men, who even though they have escaped the disastrous doom of having nothing to do for their living, and are set to work—perhaps to hard, grinding work—to earn their daily bread; yet in all their highest manhood, in reason, in imagination, in spirit, have found no work required of them—no good cause to which they can surrender themselves, no blessed work for God's glory or for man's welfare that they care to undertake. *In this moral or spiritual region of their life they are idle.* Idle because perhaps they are too exhausted by their labor for their livelihood to have any energy to put in this higher work of the soul. Idle, perhaps, because the mere dulness of their professional routine has closed in upon them, and has shut them up as in a prison-house, and they have lost the capacity to be stirred by any call to work with their imagination or their social will, and cannot believe that such work is to be done, or has any real significance or

any prospect of achievement. Their profession appeals purely to their lower and most commonplace motives. The work is done more or less mechanically ; it has no positive attractions ; it is a necessity in order to live ; its end is to escape from it with a pension. Such a life never touches the finer gifts, it never requires their coöperation ; with this result, that the man is left too often by sheer carelessness without using any of these gifts at all. And so the gifts dwindle and collapse ; they grow stale and beggared ; they lose nerve and pith ; they “stand all the day idle.” Such a man goes through his life to the very end without one high passion having ever been worked. *The best part of himself has never been brought into action.* “No man has hired it.” No spiritual ideal has claimed it. No venture has been made with it. No voice has summoned it to rise and follow. It has felt no splendid necessity laid upon it to spend itself and be spent. Earth has not inspired it, Heaven has never found it. There it lies in the man—unexamined, unexercised, unverified—until the man himself has forgotten its existence. For it, therefore, life has been given in vain. It was there to prove its power, to test its validity, to disclose what patience, what tenacity, what pluck it possessed. And it has never done it, for it has never got to work. It has been brought under no test.

Spiritual idleness comes because no one hires. Is not that the peculiar disease of a day like our own, in which we are suffering from the recoil of many disappointments ? Science has disappointed us ; lib-

erty has disappointed us ; industrialism has disappointed us ; education has disappointed us ; social reform has disappointed us ; philosophy has bitterly disappointed us.

And if other causes and ideals fail to justify their appeal to men's souls, what are we to say of the highest cause of all, of the purest ideal ? *What of the cause of God's own vineyard of the Church, of the love of Jesus Christ?* Ah ! can it be that here too these weary men in the market-place can retort, "It has not hired us" ? "There is no clear call come from God to our ears. We have listened for it keenly enough at times. We have thought how glad would be the sound, how grateful the work, if only here in the service of the Christ, the good Master, we were set our task. We would commit ourselves to bear even the burden and the heat of the day, if it were only God who hired us. But here, too, we recoil with disappointment. We hear no definite summons which assures us of its authentic validity. We hear cries for help loud enough ; but they are very human, and very mixed, and very doubtful in authority, and they contradict one another, and they dispute, and they are angry. And they all claim to be God's own voice. Which are we to believe ? Which is the master to whom we shall hire ourselves in this confused Babel of claimants ? And then the Church itself, if we fall back on that ! It is distracted by opposing movements. Its government is in a tangle. Its authority is shaken."

Ah, my brethren, that is easy enough to say from

outside—looking on. I think it quite impossible to say it from within—in active service. Outside, the semblance that the Church of God is apt to wear is piteous enough. I grant it. Always it seems to be toppling over under some fresh blow. Always it is being disfigured and brought into contempt by the antics and the anger of its members. And there are contradictions, and quarrels, and uncertainties, and doubt, and lapses, and failures which encompass its work and rob it of its promise, and render its hopes sterile. Looking on, I can well fancy dismay at the sorry sight. But within, for those committed, for those hired to the task, there is an experience wonderful, unfailing, miraculous, which is forever reversing the natural judgment. For them God is forever verifying His supremacy over all that man can do to defeat Him. Beneath the apparent chaos they become aware of a secret law and order which hold on their own way undaunted as the Spirit of the Most High verifies to them His presence and His purpose. Within the storm, though the Master seem to be asleep, yet the whisper is ever reaching them from His blessed lips, “Why are ye afraid, O ye of little faith!” Within the trouble there is always renewed the unfailing succor, the unexhausted consolation. In the heart of the night there is light found about their feet. When they feel most weak, they find themselves strong; the strength of God is made perfect in and through their weakness. When the worst hour falls upon them they hear still that unconquerable voice that says, from One who is still in their

midst, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; your joy no man taketh from you." That Church which seems ever breaking under hostile attack, sinking under the weight of its own sin, still forever survives, forever recovers, and still lifts itself from its sloth; still purges itself of its sin; still finds its work given it to do; still, though ever-dying, is ever being made alive. Under it is the unshaken rock, above it the everlasting heaven, and within it the beseechings and intercessions of the unflagging spirit of all comfort, and strength, and peace, and joy, and love. And souls are still fed with these unfailing gifts of God; and thirst is quenched in the chalice of compassion; and everywhere in quiet places the redeemed are to be found moving by still waters in green pastures at the feet of the Good Shepherd of the sheep, the Bishop and Pastor of their souls. The ancient powers are yet at work in their old habitual energy. The peace that passeth all understanding yet broods within the holy shrine. This is the amazing victory of God, achieved amid much dismal disarray. And the very dismalness of the disarray heightens the glow of the victory.

XXVI.

Fifth Week—Thursday—the Twenty-sixth Day of Lent.

Truthfulness.¹

“Let your communication be Yea, yea : Nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”—ST. MATTHEW v. 37.

BRETHREN, I believe there is real necessity that the Christian pulpit in these days of ours should bear its witness as regards this most elementary duty of speaking the truth under all circumstances and on all occasions. I know that there are certain extreme and extraordinary occasions which people produce as necessary exceptions in order to puzzle one, in order in part to blur the severity of the practical rule. I suppose there are occasions when the question what we ought to do is a very perplexing one indeed. For all practical purposes the duty of truthfulness is not only peremptory, but it is universal, and we do well to remember that our Lord warns us that to follow Him is to be exposed to trouble and to persecution. It was a religion of martyrs which He came to found. We are not required to give our life for the name of Christ ; but, depend upon it, we must not be surprised if from time to time we are required to suffer. If a man

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. Charles Gore, Canon of Westminster, England.

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will not for gain's sake say what is not true, he will in certain circumstances of life have to suffer.

What is it we hear continually about our trade, about the untruthfulness of advertisements, about the untruthfulness of business agents, about the untruthfulness which penetrates so often the concerns of retail dealing? There are many honest tradesmen, many surpassingly-honest men of business. Let us thank God for it; but we are too apt to shrug our shoulders when we hear of the dishonesty of the commercial world, and smile as if we were half-inclined to accept the maxim that truth and honesty do not ride in the same carriage. Our commercial life cannot be purged unless there are more people who are prepared as the last resort to suffer for their religion, for speaking the truth.

Let us go down to things which touch our private life. How many people there are who, when they have committed a fault, seem to think nothing more natural than to deny it till they are actually detected and denial is of no use. In ordinary conversation, for the sake of giving point to a story, to exaggerate our own importance, even at the expense of our neighbor's character, what a vast number of people there are who, without conscientious scruples at all, embroider to make their story more attractive in the telling and hearing. And there are people, not, I fear, very few, who have got to reckon this ordinary sort of wandering beyond the truth so innocuous and so obvious that they have almost lost the faculty of remembering exactly what did happen and reporting it with truth.

There are times when it behooves all of us to speak the truth, though it be the disagreeable truth, to our friends. They ask us to recommend them for some situation for which they are not fit; and how many people there are who are prepared to avoid the pain of saying what is disagreeable to their friends straight—they would say it readily enough behind their backs—by saying almost anything that will relieve them of the burden their duty would lay upon them.

Then again in a period of theological controversy, Christians surely should know that *truth is moral as well as theological*. It is a terrible thing in controversy to show any degree of recklessness as to whether the particular imputation made is strictly and not more than truth in the particular case in which it is made. It is an awful thing, in contempt of the strict truth, to pour a vague atmosphere of suspicion and infamy over whole classes of people.

Why should we be truthful? We get to the question of motive. St. Paul gives the motive. It is because “Ye are members one of another.” He really gives another motive, in a sense, the deeper one:—because we are forever living and acting and speaking in the presence and the power of God.

God is everywhere; God is in all things. Truly worship is nothing less than this—it is the seeing God in all things, and all things in God. All elements of beauty, all elements of power, all truths, all worthy characters in men about you, are but so many thin veils through which the eternal love and beauty and power and goodness of God are speak-

ing to your souls. The whole earth is full of His glory. Heaven is His throne—ah! an intensified presence there—earth is His footstool and Jerusalem, for all the strangeness of its inhabitants, is the city of the Great King.

That is the commonplace of religion, but it is a commonplace we so seldom think of ; and it carries with it another great thought—that *God, Who now conceals Himself under the veil of nature, will one day manifest Himself and us with Him.* Now I may conceal myself from my fellow-men ; I may speak one thing outwardly, and may live a life which is a lie ; I may speak one thing outwardly and mean one thing inwardly ; I may give a record of fact than which nothing is farther from the truth ; but there comes the day of disclosure, the day when God shall bring every secret thing unto judgment, whether it be good or evil, the day when that which is hidden shall be disclosed, and when we shall know one another exactly as we are, as we have done, as we have spoken, as we have thought, without veil or hindrance or concealment. The background of all religious life is this practice of the presence of God, this consciousness that God is nearer to us than the air we breathe, this consciousness that the word we speak we speak in the ear of Jehovah, that the life we live is lived in His presence. That is the ground of truthfulness. Therefore live, therefore speak as in His presence. Therefore speak the truth which in the most ordinary conversation, and not in oaths merely, is the sacred truth, “Let your yea be yea, and your nay

be nay, for whatsoever is more than this cometh of the Evil One."

Let us examine ourselves, therefore, about this very practical matter. The point is whether we have got an ideal of lofty and unalterable truthfulness, and whether we resolve that, by the help of God, and in the consciousness of His presence, we are going to be in all our words and in all our relations truthful, trustworthy men and women. Therefore, not only let me feel that I should not dare to say what was not true on my oath, not only let me feel that I would have honesty in my business dealings, not only let me feel that I will not speak maliciously to the defamation of my neighbor's character, not only that I will not blacken others, but resolve that in my ordinary promises and engagements, I will be trustworthy. Resolve that you will be the sort of man whom if you say you will do a thing people will expect to find you doing it, and if you say you will not do a thing, people will not expect to find you doing it. Be trustworthy, be truthful in your ordinary conversation. For the whole of life we are to live in the light as in God's presence, that is the only basis of a noble life ; we are to live in fellowship, man with man, because altogether we live in the one unchangeable fellowship of the light and life of God.

XXVII.

Fifth Week—Friday—the Twenty-seventh Day of Lent.

Being and Doing.¹

“Thou art good and doest good.”—Ps. cxix. 68.

THERE are some sayings in the Bible which are windows through which we can look into heaven. Not until we die can we enter Paradise and look out. But now we can stand outside and look in.

Thus our text is like a pane of glass, through which we see the difference between God and man. With God, “TO BE” is “TO DO.” Because He *is* good He *does* good. It is so with His angels. It is so with His saints in Paradise. Being is Doing. That is the law of heaven. But it is not always the law of earth. There are some good people, I am sorry to say, who do almost nothing for the help of mankind. They are pure, they are honest, they often pray, they are Communicants, they tell the truth and they do no harm. And yet, if they should die to-day, hardly any one would miss them. The world would lose very little.

In fact, some very wicked men, although they do a great deal of evil, also do more good than a whole

¹ Sermon preached by Rev. Cornelius B. Smith, D. D., Rector Emeritus of St. James Church, New York.

churchful of sleepy Christians. This does not excuse their badness. Don't apologize for a man's betraying his trust by saying that he is kind to the poor. Nothing can palliate dishonor. But it ought to shame all lazy believers to remember that some men who are stained with their sins, now and then step aside, and secure the passage of some law, or create a park, which will bless generations yet unborn, while thousands of dormant religious people fail to do anything of equal value to make life happier for mankind.

It is so much easier to go to church and *think* of heaven, than to go to the unfortunate and *carry* heaven to them. Nevertheless, dear friends, this is just what the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ must do, during the new age which is dawning, or else I fear there will be a great decline in religion. For Christianity has now reached the point where it must go forward, on the lines that have been opened by Toynbee Halls, Social Clubs for men and boys and girls, Brotherhoods of St. Andrew, Parish Houses, and beautiful churches in the poorest neighborhoods; every Communicant giving to these objects not money only, but active personal service and fraternity; or else the world is going to say that modern Christianity is too unlike the religion of its Founder, to deserve a thoughtful man's attention.

There was never another age that respected *work* as this age respects it. There was never another age that reverenced the actual "Imitation of Jesus," as this age reverences it. But the Twen-

tieth Century is going to say to the Churches, "Do a Christlike WORK, or I will have no part with you!"

My friends, not long ago religion was able to preserve its organization and its numbers by the holding of sacred services twice on Sunday, and once in the middle of each week. The people said their prayers and heard the preacher, and thought chiefly of the other world, and prepared themselves to die. Very little was said in the pulpit about preparing to live. Almost no allusion was made to that work amid the multitudes which Jesus was always doing from morning till night. The fear of God was then a more alarming motive than it will ever be again. And it had this value, that it brought nearly everybody to church.

Nevertheless, we should be very thankful for the change. Christ founded His kingdom upon *love*, not on *fear*. It is an infinitely better, safer, and stronger foundation. But I tell you, men and brethren, now that we are building upon love it must be a real love. That is what people saw in the first centuries. "By this," said Christ, "shall all men know that ye are My disciples, that ye have love one to another."

This earth never saw another such "Love-Society" as the early Church. It was born in an age fearfully selfish and corrupt. But just when evil and cruelty were at their height, there suddenly appeared in all the leading cities of the world, a new and peculiar people who were ready to live and die for their neighbors. They

were kind to those who “despitefully used them and persecuted them.” They brought the glad tidings that God Himself had come out of His blue skies, and lived in our houses, walked in our streets, died our own death, and laid in one of our own graves, and risen triumphant from the dust. They said that He had redeemed mankind, and taught that God is Love, and that we are all His children, and brothers and sisters of each other.

It was a wholly new truth. It attracted and it electrified the best element in the old Greek and Roman civilization.

That, my friends, is the secret of the sudden and mighty conquest of the Ancient World by Christianity. Unselfish love was flung like fire over the whole Roman Empire, and the frozen religion of the old gods couldn’t stand before it ; but Jupiter, Diana, Venus, Mercury, and Minerva went down like dust before God in Christ, who loved the world, and gave Himself for it.

Ah, yes ! You may argue for Christianity for a thousand years, and make no impression on the unbelievers ; but *be* Christianity, and all mankind falls into your arms. Don’t argue ! *Live !* Argument is a beggar by the side of Love.

But men don’t want a sham love. They will not accept a lazy love. The day for that has passed. Now the time has come for every Christian to be an active lover of his fellow-men. Young men and young women, you who are full of the morning and belong to the new age, don’t think of living without some definite work for the outside multi-

tudes. Religion begins at home, but if it is good for anything great it takes the whole world in. You may have a class, you may join a guild, you may give time to reforms:—it is not for me or for any preacher to say what form your usefulness is to take. But if you have the spirit of Christ, you will find some people who are poorer than you are, or who know less than you know, and in showing them brotherhood, and giving them light, you will find a joy that the world knows not of. Oh ! It is splendid to discover noble souls in dim places ; to reveal to them their own possibilities, and to flash through them the brightness and the love of heaven.

Alas ! The great world doesn't go to church ! Why ?

One of the chief reasons is that it hasn't seen enough Christians with *Christ's Christianity*. Them it will receive. Them it will love. With them it will attend sacred worship.

The crying need of churches is to make an end of small religion, and to bring in a great religion. Let them blaze with the fires of love Divine, and then, from sea to sea we shall have a converted world, rejoicing in a light beyond the splendor of the morning.

XXVIII.

Fifth Week—Saturday—The Twenty-eighth Day of Lent.

Having Some Part with Our Lord in Suffering.¹

“The fellowship of His sufferings.”—PHIL. iii. 10.

ST. PAUL desired to secure the strange and awful privilege of fellowship with Christ in suffering. And if this singular aspiration were legitimate in an apostle, it can scarcely be otherwise in us; and hence I will ask your attention while I endeavor to set out the thoughts and realities of this desire. In doing so, our simplest plan will be to settle what this wish cannot have meant.

1. *St. Paul did not desire to die like Christ.* A man might be crucified, and yet have no fellowship with the sufferings of the Crucified One. Likeness in suffering is one thing; fellowship in suffering another.

2. *St. Paul did not crave a share in the unique experience of the Redeemer, as the grand instance of the mysterious law of atonement by sacrifice.* He did not mean that the sufferings God was pleased to assign him should in the remotest way have either communion or connection with the atoning work of the Redeemer. That work he knew, and we know,

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. William Lefroy, A. M., Liverpool, England.

stands alone. Nor may we doubt that of all the fearful elements in the last agonies of Jesus, His utter bereavement of sympathy, His oppressive loneliness, was not the least. Oh, believe me, St. Paul could never have thought of sharing in these vicarious agonies! They do not admit of fellowship.

We shall be able to understand St. Paul's wish if we remember first of all that *the sufferings of Christ arose out of His deep love for men*. The love of Christ for the souls of men is measured by His love for the Father, who says "All souls are mine." Hence these wearying controversies with the men of His generation were to Jesus occasions when His holy soul was torn with pain, through the combined influences of affection for sinners and abhorrence of their sin. Jesus loved the Pharisee, whose sinister design was to entangle Him in His talk; He loved the Sadducee, whose coarse materialism or subtle unbelief, ignored the necessity of His sacrifice, although spellbound by the chastened splendor of His character; He loved the priests who debauched their office by bartering for His capture; He loved the people whose voices one day rang out the royal words, "Hosanna to the Son of David," and the next, "Away with Him, crucify Him"; He loved the men of war who set Him at nought, the drunkards whose rhyming ribaldry was foretold by the Holy Spirit; yes, He loved the disciples who deserted Him, the Peter who denied Him; and in my soul I feel He had a tear for the blackest heart that ever beat in human breast. Thus the great heart of Christ was broken by the pressure of His passion-

ate love for men; thus was it saddened to the very death because of their sin. He died because He loved the one who loathed the other, and in thus loving and loathing we have a clearer and a truer view of that travail of the soul of Christ which shall yet be satisfied.

And now we see what the apostle desired. *He desired that new nature which would enable him to suffer as Jesus suffered at the sight of sin.* He craved that transfiguration of character which would make holiness a horror, iniquity a plague, and transgression a pang. He entertained the heavenly ambition of being made a “partaker of the divine nature,” even though it made him susceptible of a thousand agonies. Yes, this was St. Paul’s prayer, when he said he renounced the friendships of youth, the associations of manhood, the smiles of those he loved, and the manifold advantages of his position, in order that he might know Christ, and the “fellowship of His suffering.”

This, his purpose I submit as an incentive to some, a consolation to others, and to all a test of our state before God. From its consideration the question knocks at the door of many a heart, “*How am I affected by contact with sin?*” Men still make light of sin. It is trifled with in much of the literature which teems from the press. It is the pivot on which fascinating figures move, sometimes in the pages of a novel, or the strains of a well-known song; sometimes in the thrilling death-scene of an opera; aye, even our hospitalities are sometimes degraded by hovering on the narrow margin which

separates simplicity from excess, temperance from extravagance, self-restraint from self-indulgence.

Then again, is it not true, painfully true, that *men have a hundred merry names for sins* which make God frown and good men weep? Men for whom the Saviour shed His precious blood—men made in the image of God, rational, responsible, immortal, yea, laden with the obligations of holy baptism—smile on scenes which made the Son of God shed bitter tears, and which nailed Him to the tree? If there is here a soul who smiles where Christ would sigh, and jests at that which made His life one long passion, filled His heart with overwhelming agony, and His soul with sorrow and fear; if amongst us now there is even one who has made merry over the deplorable excesses of the prodigal, the melancholy wreck of the sinful, the degrading exhibition of the inebriate; or, in a higher level, if you have trifled with the sanctities of religion, belief, or Scripture, and practically despised and rejected the salvation which is yours by repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, then you have no fellowship with the sufferings of the Saviour. You have not the Spirit of Christ; and “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” Thus you are supplied with reliable evidence of your state before God.

To others the passage speaks in a finer and sweeter tone. *It assures the believer that much of his sorrow is the counterpart of real joy.* He may, on his way homeward this very day, hear expressions which make his flesh creep, and his heart

sink within him ; he may hear mere children take God's holy name in vain ; see them profane life, language, the house of God, and the Sabbath day. Or there may be here one whose lot in life is cast in a home where God is forgotten, His word is un-studied, His church is forsaken, the sacrament is deserted, and Christ again despised and rejected of men. The Sunday-school teacher may grieve over the sin of some young or elder scholar ; the district visitor may return from long toil, weary with sorrow for the sins of those whose souls she dearly loves ; but "be of good cheer," better far to weep with Christ for the sins and souls of those you love, than to laugh with the heartless, the loveless, and the lost. Better far to have a fellowship with the suffering of your Saviour, with all the spiritual grief it is sure to bring, than to demonstrate your degradation in the scale of being ; to proclaim your callousness, selfishness, and coarseness. Better far to be a "partaker of the divine nature," even though you grieve over the havoc of religion, reason, and virtue, than to "walk in the counsel of the ungodly," to "stand in the way of sinners" or to "sit in the seat of the scornful."

And so, be it your joy that there is a sense in which you can participate in the woes of your Master ; be it a cause of gratitude that, alone as He was in the work of salvation, He permits you to be like Him, a man of sorrows ! And if your love grow cold, your devotion be threatened by disturbance or distraction—if your self-denial be in any-wise imperilled, or your work for Him be dimin-

ished by disappointment, recall the aspiration of His greatest preacher, and pray, as the deepest and most needful desire of your heart, "Oh, my God, whatever Thou seest fit to take from me, give me, oh, give me, a fellowship with my Saviour in suffering!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

Sixth Week—Monday—the Twenty-ninth Day
of Lent.

God's Best Comes Last.¹

“When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and knew not whence it was; (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”—ST. JOHN ii. 9, 10.

HERE in the text is a passing remark made in the unreflecting merriment of a marriage feast by a man who knew nothing of the ground on which he was treading, of the act which was proceeding, of the Person to whom his words referred. He had merely been startled into an outburst of compliment to the bridegroom who was himself ignorant of the cause, so he spoke with a light heart; and yet the gay words, as they fell from his lips, took a deeper tone and were touched to a finer issue—a truth leaps to light in them which is beyond his ken. The man himself perhaps, through the sheer simplicity of his gladness, has gone through to the very heart of the matter; that which has struck his imagination from without by its momentary

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. Henry Scott Holland, M. A., Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, England.

surprise, has kindled in him a felicitous capacity to hit upon the vital contrast which holds good everywhere between man's ways and God's; but *a secret has dropped under the excitement of an accident*; a secret which goes to the root of the Incarnation, a secret which that old Apostle verified again and again for himself through all the long years that intervened since he was invited with Jesus and His mother to the wedding at Cana.

Man brings out the best first; God holds His best in reserve to the last. How deeply, how profoundly true, how far that goes—so he declares. Little children, he would say, lay hold of it! It was but a passing phrase, tossed out of the laughter of a feast by a heedless speaker, who may have forgotten it as soon as it was uttered, but let it be graven into the rock! Wherever this Gospel of the Lord be preached in the whole world, there let it be remembered how on that famous day the ruler of the feast called the bridegroom unto him and said, “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and afterward that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good wine until now.” Every man! It is man's normal habit; it is what he always does; his native instinct left to itself is sure to prompt him that way. *Not in one thing only, but in everything a man brings out his best first.* At the beginning he sets himself to show his good side; he is eager to please, to be friends, to be on good terms with everybody. He has the right intentions and he is glad to make them manifest. He and his fellow-men ought to have a pleas-

ant time together; life should be cheerful, and everybody should lend help to foster this good fellowship. There is the natural way we all begin, and almost everybody can hold out some fair promise, and at the beginning at least make an attempt to set forth good wine. The difficulty is to keep it up. We have gone off with such a burst of hearty good-will that we have forgotten how we are to go on; we have not quite realized the strain that will be put upon our resources; we have been occupied with the anxiety to make a good impression, we have been in haste to secure the good of the moment.

“Afterward that which is worse.” Could any words more fitly express the wailing cry that goes up from man that is born to perish? All over the earth, in all ages, that has been the bitterness of human experience. It has started, but it has not arrived; it has promised, but it has not fulfilled; it has begun, but not sustained; hopes languish, efforts flag, aspirations droop, the heroic sinks to commonplace, the spiritual thrill fades into dull routine; the colors die out of the sunrise, the flatness of the afternoon turns all to drab; the chief whom we have followed slackens and leads no more; the saint repeats his old watchwords without the old fire! Yet it was good wine at the first; it was no fiction, no deceit, no blunder!

Nothing can be sadder, nothing can more plainly signalize the sorrow of man's heart, the brand of his failure, than this dismal retribution which is ever awaiting his finest effort—“afterward that which

is worse." This is the cause of the grief which poets have always been singing, that is the wail that haunts the epitaphs which speak from the ancient tombs ; and indeed, so real is this truth that it is to be found in the pages of the Sacred Book. Inspiration recognizes it as a theme which embodies the unsatisfied yearnings of humanity, which cannot find its goal, and so the preacher is allowed to pronounce his melancholy verdict.

But we cannot but think that the words carry us deeper yet than human decay, for that decay is, after all, itself the signal of a darker evil that lurks beneath it, the poison of sin, and the refrain, therefore, which conveys the melancholy of the decline has in it, too, the note that comes from wrong. For is there any characteristic more inherently typical of sin than this ? *At the first sin sets forth what seems to be such good wine, and afterward that which is worse.* That is the sin and the disillusion which it brings with it. Its promises are so reckless, its offers so deceptive, that at the first we are overwhelmed with its generosity, so large-hearted it is, so free, so good-natured. How different this full world of sin, in its ease, in its spontaneity, from the pinched and scrupulous resources of piety and virtue.

What would life be, what would it become, if it were to be a reiterated cry of thanksgiving which fell from our lips at each fresh stage of existence, at each incoming experience ! That is what may be true. *If God's grace be at the root of our growth,* then youth may come and go, and still as it falls

away from us it will but serve to disclose more fully the latent secret of its own purest joy. The blossom has been fair enough, but fairer still the flower, and after the flower has withered, lo ! there is the best that still remains, the fruit wherein God our Father is glorified. *Yield yourself to Christ, and life will be an advance, not a decline ;* it will ever hold in it the germ of richer supplies. True, the flash of the early impulse will pass, but out of it, breaking it by the eternal force of Christ, springs a stronger forward motion with a steadier and a deeper rapture. True, the glamour of first love will fade, but from within its heart abides the surer peace of a perfected passion. In Christ the discipline of time does but serve to draw from the grape a fuller and finer vintage. As the trembling years drop from us, carrying away so much that we hold dear, so much that has seemed to us as the very joy of our being, a strange discovery of a larger, riper life in God that yet awaits us makes itself known. Again the wonder works, again the grace is felt, again out of our trouble, just as we fear to face our loss there will break from our heart the adoring thanksgiving :—

“I never knew before how much the love of God could restore for me. I never dreamed that life could be so strong, so glad, so free. Now first I taste the fulness of God’s chalice. Oh, my God, Thou hast kept the good wine until now.” That may be the voice of all who will sit at the marriage feast with Jesus. How blessed if, far on in old age, when to outward eyes they seem bereft of every-

thing that can minister to joy and hope, while each year is lessening opportunities and imposing severer limits, they still can say in silence in the secret places of the soul, "Nay, it is better than before. The good wine has been kept until now." And still, when at last the evil days must come, and "the years wherein it will be said, I have no pleasure in them, when the silver cord must be loosed, and the golden bowl be broken, when the mourners go about the streets and the man goes to his long home," then as the soul passes out on its lone journey it will find a great peace enfold it ; it will feel the everlasting arms beneath it ; it will know the depth of the riches of the love of God that passes knowledge ; it will look up into the face of its own dear Master and King, who has been throughout the Lord of all its joy, and say, "This is the best ; Thou hast kept, O Lord, the good wine until now—this wine which I drink now for the first time with Thee in the kingdom of heaven."

XXX.

Sixth Week—Tuesday—the Thirtieth Day of Lent.

Crucifying the Old Nature.¹

“If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him.”—2 TIM. ii. 12.

IT is the duty of all of us to crucify, not our nature, which is a noble and a splendid thing, but to crucify that which in our nature is base and bad. We must bring what is base and bad to the bar of conscience; we must determine to kill it. To use the metaphor and the phraseology of Scripture, we are to apprehend, we are to try, we are to condemn, and we are to nail to the cross the old man.

When Christ was crucified there were first the nail in the feet, and then the nail in either hand, then the crown of thorns. What are the three nails, and what is the crown of thorns whereby the old man may in the companionship of Christ be placed upon the cross? The first nail that we may use for the destruction of our own iniquity is *the right acceptance of temptation*. Life is a time of trial, of temptation. We know that our blessed Master bore the burden and took the trials of being a man. Then we are quite sure of one thing. When we are trying to bear and use temptation, we are quite sure of the answering mind of Christ. And

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. W. J. Knox Little, M. A., Canon of Worcester Cathedral, England.

then pause for a moment and remember, it is no sort of use to ask, "Why you should be tempted, why you should be tried?" Men must indeed, as it has been said, have very shallow minds if they think that in the depths of their ignorance they are to understand the Why of God this side of the grave. Suffice it for us that the first nail we can drive into our lust and passion is the right use of temptation. And then remember that we come fitted and equipped to meet the great eventuality. You have reason, you have conscience, you have thought, sufficient knowledge, will; above all, you have Divine grace. You come into the world fitted and equipped for the law of your being; you come into the world prepared, if you like, to use the powers that are given you, to meet temptation; that is, to drive the first nail into the body of the old man. Further, the question is this: How you use the unique power of responsibility of your will? How to decide about the great difference between what you like and what you ought to do? That is the important question. The duty is how to use our freedom—how, as we are made in the image of God, to use the freedom of choice that we certainly have, to make the higher nature govern the lower, how to make the lower wishes subservient to the nobler will. That is the question; and then we are reminded, are we not? —it is the saying of one of the greatest teachers—that the whole interest of history is the moral interest, how men choose, how they prefer the right, the just, the true, the pure, to the dazzling

temptation of immediate success, and therefore history comes and says that one of the greatest powers—do not start when I say it—placed at our disposal is the dealing with temptation ; and to deal with it rightly, my brothers, is to drive the first nail into the bad part of our nature, into the old man ; and therefore what I say about that nail is this :—Pray and strive that you may be delivered from the meshes and entanglements of pretence and self-seeking, that you may be kept from the unrealities and the secret hollownesses that don't allow you to do what is right ; pray that you may be delivered from the fascination of sin which blinds us. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for without temptation conquered, you would never be a man. “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; the Lord shall give him the crown of life ;” indeed, we are quite certain of that. Blessed is he that drives in that first nail against all unreality, against all pretence, all the insincerities that come to us always. From the treasons and the treacheries of the human will, from the miserable pretences, from the respectable hypocrisies that keep us from doing right when we know what is right, from tampering with sin, from pretending to think that what is bad is good—good Lord, deliver us. You must be tempted. To bear temptation nobly and manfully is to drive the first nail into the crucified body of the old man.

And then *the second nail is this*—sorrow. Right and left, up and down there is that tremendous, that most touching, that most moving fact ; there

is sorrow ; and to deal with sorrow rightly, is to deal with the second nail in the death of the old man. You may be as prosperous as you like, my brother, at the moment, but, mind you, there is a universal and a strange law—there is the law of searching sorrow. Tears, tears. Ah ! who shall tell the mystery of tears, to find that in your life there are sudden and crushing changes that go deep down beneath the immediate appearance of the moment, beneath the acts of every day, to remember how constantly those changes come about, and how they may come.

When you remember your own life, you are bound to remember the greatness and the certainty of sorrow, you are bound to remember that if life be the strongest fact, and if death be the one certainty, then our sweetest, our most glorious music must be set in a minor key. If sorrow comes to you, how do you bear it ? This is the second nail, if it is borne well, in the crucifixion of the old man.

And then, there is the third nail. There is not only temptation, not only sorrow, there *is the great deep mystery of pain*. Now pain—I need not repeat it to you, it has been taught by a thousand teachers—pain is the deepest, but pain is the most universal experience of mortal life. Why it is sent I do not undertake to say any more than I undertake to say why God should govern His own world in the way that He does. But there it is. Our freedom, our mind, our conscience, our sensibilities, they are made so that they almost invite and certainly admit the visitor pain.

There you have three nails—temptation, sorrow, pain ; but what is really important is this : how do you deal with temptation ? how do you make sorrow the way to higher things ? how do you allow pain, as the great heroes of the world have allowed it, to become the very mistress and source of virtues ? If you use these things, my brothers, rightly, they are nails you drive into the feet and into the hands of your baser natures, they are your way of crucifying—to use the metaphor of St. Paul—the old man.

There is, beside the nails, the crown of thorns. And *how are you going to use the crown of thorns ?* There is a triumph to manhood if it lives and strives in the power of Christ. Will you remember what a great thing it is to be a man ? Will you learn to put your foot upon the brute within you ? Will you learn how splendid is self-sacrifice, and how great it is not to live for yourselves, but for others. If we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him ; and there is first the toil and then the slow struggle to victory which is never complete until we are able to say, “It is finished ; into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” There is the toiling, there is the labor, there is the slow advance, but then at last you are king. If we suffer, we shall reign ; at last you are king. This is the noblest of human endeavors ; this is the way in which we can help other people, because we begin by governing ourselves ; this is the opening of the door to goodness and duty ; this is the imitation of Jesus Christ.

XXXI.

Sixth Week—Wednesday—the Thirty-first Day of Lent.

You Must Face Danger to Gain Benefit.¹

“So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”—GEN. iii. 24.

MAN was banished from the Garden of Eden. The tree of life in the midst of the Garden of Eden was now safeguarded by the presence of the cherubim and by the flaming sword. We must not suppose, I think, that there was anything undesirable now in the tree of life as such. Sometimes we are inclined to read the story as though it meant that it was no longer desirable that man should take the tree of life. What I think the narrative really does mean is that it was no longer desirable that man should take that tree of life on the old conditions. *The old conditions were conditions of ease.* Man was free to everything that grew in the garden save the one forbidden fruit. The tree of life was before him. But now the conditions are entirely changed, and you will see that the change of conditions brings about not a change of principle, but a change in the application of a principle which was

¹ From a sermon by the Right Rev. Wm. Boyd Carpenter, D. D., Lord Bishop of Ripon.

destined to govern the whole of man's life. That principle is that *that which was desirable to be gained was no longer to be gained by methods of ease*. If man is to take of the tree of life he can only take of the tree of life by facing the flaming sword which guards its place. If man is to eat of the produce of the ground he is no longer to eat it as it springs forth of itself, but thorns and thistles are springing out of the ground at the same time, and in the sweat of his brow he is to take the fair and necessary fruits of the earth. The fruits of the earth are no less desirable and necessary than before, but now they are to be taken under a new condition. The same is true of the tree of life ; it is still as desirable as ever. Man still may dream of the joy and the glory of partaking of that tree of life ; indeed he does so. The tree of life is as desirable for men as ever it was, but it can no longer be taken under the old conditions of ease. Now *man must face danger in order to win it*. Now it must be purchased at the cost of the risk of life. If man is to take the tree of life he must front the sword which turns every way to safeguard it from those who would approach.

So the principle which we are seeking begins now to appear. The order of life in which men are to live henceforth is the order under which *nothing that is worth winning can be won save at the expenditure of effort*. It is precisely in harmony with the principle of which we have spoken with regard to the eating of man's bread. Now, labor, effort, and sacrifice are to be the conditions of winning the need-

ful supports of life. The highest of objects which man may desire, the achievement of his noblest dreams, the achievement of his highest successes, are now conditioned by this, that they must be won, and can be won, only by courageous and death-daring hearts.

If that is the principle I would ask you to notice how true that principle is, whether we consider life as a growth, a gradual development and improvement, or whether we consider life to be as it is—a great and widely-diffused influence over others. In these two ways we must always be able to regard life—your life and mine. It may be looked upon as an individual life developing from point to point and from moment to moment, and changing therefore its aspect according to the opportunities of development which we give it; or we may regard life as being, as it is, a diffusive power, for no man's life is an isolated thing. It exercises influence over those about him, and your life and mine may be measured, and must be measured, always both by what it is in itself as a growing thing and by what it is in its exercise of influence over others. But whichever way I look at life, whether I consider your life and mine as growing like things apart, or whether I regard life as being, as it is, an influence exercised over others, the same law is true. I cannot either win the tree of life for myself or win it to give to others save on the condition of facing that flaming sword. It is the law of existence that whatever you look at as the tree of life, as therefore the desirable object, you must reach forward to it at

the cost of the sword. Ask the man who has had experience of training men in life, "Why is it that there are so many failures?" Take what occupation you please, and then tell me what is the secret of the failure of so many. The answer is this: "There are many who look across the little frontier into the Eden of their ambition, who have the capacity for desiring the tree of life and think their life would be happy if only they could grasp that fruit, who yet have neither the energy, nor the industry, nor the self-denial, nor the courage, nor the daring patience to pursue the path which it is necessary they should pursue in order to attain it. There are hundreds who want to grasp the fruit, but only a few who have the courage to pay the price which it is necessary should be paid." In other words, all life brings to us the same thought that we are living in a condition in which, in the order of things, if we desire the thing which to us seems to be desirable, we must be prepared to pay the price. The sword stands between us and the tree of life.

The growth of life means that as you pass from lower to higher you must lay something aside. You cannot win, in the order of existence in which you live, the higher which you desire save by the sacrifice of what is lower. With the child it is so. "Put away your toys," you say to the child, "the hour has come for higher things. Your intellect now demands that it should enter into the arena of life. You have had your little opportunity of experimenting at your leisure amid these things, the toys of your childhood. Now you enter into a larger

life. The toys must be put away." The law of sacrifice enters into the nursery, and as you pass from the nursery to the schoolroom you have to put the knife once more to the things which were dear in order that the larger and the better things may be developed.

Now if that is true just think for a moment that it must be true in the moral or the spiritual advance of man. Is it enough for you to say, "My life is well esteemed, my condition respectable, my name honored"? Or is it for us to say, "There is something more that I desire than that. I am not content that I should be as a man who only holds his place here in the mere conventional esteem of men? There is a power by which I am judged, nay, there is a power by which I judge myself, which teaches me and tells me that I cannot and dare not stop here. I am created with a capacity for growth, and my growth means the aspiration after something better, and I must be God's man in God's world. I must be the thing which God would have me be; and I must not be satisfied because Society is satisfied, and I must not be satisfied because my family is satisfied, but I must only and I can only be satisfied when I have reached out my hand to grasp something yet higher still." That higher is that *you should be ready to move onward in spiritual and moral force*, seeing that there is nothing which you would desire more than that you should become yet more righteous, filled with such a thirst after righteousness that you cannot be satisfied with the world as it is, filled with such a capacity of love for oth-

ers that you could not be satisfied with your own ease in the contemplation of their sorrow and their misery, filled with such an unrest which teaches you that there can be no peace for the soul of man until he has reached that real tree of life which means the fruits of good, the fruits of righteousness, the fruits of faith, the fruits of love, the fruits of consecrated and dedicated life. If therefore *the law of growth be worth anything, it means that you can only step up to this by sacrifice.* This is exactly what Christ said. Here was a young man, amiable, exactly the picture of that state of Society which I wish to describe where there is no blame, no harm, no moral offence which can be alleged against him, but as to whom Christ declares that there is something lacking. If he would be perfect he must put the sword to his own sense of ease and comfort. He must face the flame; he must sell all that he has. He must throw in his lot with that life which is still the crowning ideal life of mankind—the life of Christ filling him. If he would grasp with this the true Tree of Life it can only be by facing and fronting that sword.

Turn the thought once more. Life is not merely developed. Life is not the pursuit of self. Life is an influence, and no man lives without diffusing that influence either for good or evil round about him. And no man can be satisfied by saying, “I am a creature apart, and so long as I fashion my life as I please and as I think proper, none have a right to interfere with me.” Take life, then, as an influence, and I say that even

then you must face the sword that you may grasp the tree of life. This is the hardest thing of all. If I shall choose to live a life of unselfishness ; if I shall choose to live a life for the sake of others, can I not just take the tree of life and distribute it to my brother men without encountering this sword ? Surely, if then my desire is thus human and philanthropic that I am ready to put aside all thought of myself, I shall then be able to gather this fruit for them without such a sacrifice as that. And the answer is no. Though you sit outside the Garden of Eden, and you behold these fair fruits and looking round upon the multitudes at your side you say, "Would God I could take of these fair fruits and give to these in their need ; would that I could take of the invigorating power and give new moral and spiritual energy to these ; would that remembering their sorrow and their starvation I could take of that fruit and fill their souls with joy and gladness," still even so you cannot gather them save you face that sword which turns every way to keep the tree of life. The benefactors of men have been always compelled to confront that sword. In the smallest things it is true. The man who makes a new discovery, the man who has invented something which will be a benefit to his fellow-men—how much has he to encounter the sword and the flame of criticism ? If there is to be a benefit conferred upon men the Lord of life Himself has told us that the only condition upon which it can be conferred is through the sword, through the pain, through the suffering. He stood, and when men were saying to

Him, "The crown and the world may be yours," when these eager, ambitious souls that saw things only after a worldly fashion were ready to come and take Him and make Him a king by force, He stood amongst His disciples and said, "The crown, that is, the power of conferring benefit upon men—the crown, that is the capacity of helping my brother man can only be won through the Cross." The seed cannot grow except it die, and so He stood and proclaimed that if any man would put upon his brow the crown which the philanthropist seeks to wear, the crown of love, the crown of sympathy, the crown of kindness, he can only do it at the cost of the sword. And so Christ wrought facing the Cross, and if He is crowned He is crowned with a crown of human gratitude, because He was first crowned with a crown of thorns. If you would take the place of following the Christ because you are animated by the desire of making your influence felt for the highest good of the world you can only grasp the tree of life and distribute its benefits to your fellow-men if you are prepared to go and face the flaming sword. What was your baptism if it was not a death to something that you might be alive to something better; the death of sin that you might reach to a life of righteousness; the death of the old nature, that the new nature might be manifested? This is progress; this is advancement; this is a movement from the lower to the higher, that there shall be the sword planted in the heart of the old nature in order that the new nature may be raised up in us. And if you and I wish to live

lives full of real, personal influence upon the world, if we wish to follow our Master, be sure of this, that there is no chance of it for any soul of man who has not learned the experience of the death of the lower that the life of the higher might be liberated also.

XXXII.

Sixth Week—Thursday—the Thirty-second Day of Lent.

Living in Christ.¹

“Abide in Me and I in you.”—JOHN xv. 4.

“ABIDE in Me!” These words sum up all Christian life. “And I in you.” These words sum up all the promises of the Lord to Christians. To “abide” in Christ, what does it mean?

It means, first of all, *to cherish in the mind the constant recollection of the Lord Jesus Christ*, of what He was, and what He said, and what He did, and to have Him constantly present, as it were, to our thoughts. The cherishing of the thought of Christ, the calling Him back to mind, the frequent reference to Him in the thought of other things, does not mean that we are to shut out altogether all thoughts of other things, but rather that the thought of Christ should be so present that all other thoughts coming into the mind should, as it were, derive an inspiration from the secret presence of that one thought which makes all things heavenly. And as we cherish His presence so must we cherish constantly the thought that we are His, and that He is ours; that the thought of Him, the

¹ From a sermon by the Most Rev. Frederick Temple, D. D., Archbishop of Canterbury.

memory of Him—above all, so far as we can attain to it, the love of Him—should secretly move all that is within the soul. So, in the first place, shall we abide in Christ.

But to abide in Christ means *not merely* to think of Him vaguely, but *to study His teaching*, to study it often and thoughtfully to endeavor to see how it applies to every circumstance in our service of Him; to study it as it is written in the Gospels, as it is expounded in the Epistle; to study it with care, to study it with quiet meditation, with constant accompanying prayer for enlightenment; to study it with care as men study that which they value. To abide in Christ is to learn His teaching and to learn it in ever-increasing fulness as years go by, to learn it so that it shall be familiar to the mind, and perhaps also familiar to the tongue until the very intellect shall be transformed by the power of His heavenly word.

And again, it is not only in studying His teaching that we abide in Him, but *in meditation on His actions*, on all His wonderful mercies from the highest to the lowest, on the love and the unselfishness, and on the surrender even of that which is highest in order that He might be a blessing to His own creatures; in meditation on everything that is recorded in which He showed His power, but, above all, on His marvelous kindness. By meditation on these things naturally we begin to feel the power and the beauty that is in them. By meditation on these things all His works of mercy become realities to our thoughts until we feel as if we al-

most hear the words that He spoke and see the mercies that He bestowed.

And yet once more, to abide in Christ *is to live by His example*. It seems as if nothing could be more impossible to bid us follow than to follow His example. He was God, and we are but weak and sinful men; how can we follow the Divine example in our weak and petty life? How can we follow the Divine example when there is so much within us that is false, and so much that is ungenerous? How can we follow His example? He Himself has told us that even to give a cup of cold water is a thing that He will notice if it is a thing which is done in His spirit. And that spirit should animate all the actions of every day. No doubt it is here particularly that it seems as if our power to obey His precept must break down. To follow His example! How can it be done? The Lord Himself when He calls us to follow His example knows our weakness, and knows what is needed for the task He has put upon us. He enters into all the follies, and all the blindness, and all the passions, and all the temptations that mark our characters and lower our lives. Without sin Himself, He nevertheless shared all the trouble of human life, and, as if to encourage us, these strange and beautiful words have been written by His direction, that He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. He learned obedience because He passed through all that was needed to make obedience perfect. He learned what to obey really meant. His humanity had to pass through what our humanity passes

through. What was the struggle, what was the trouble that perpetually impeded obedience? He learned to feel it, and still He retains that humanity which felt it, and He sympathizes with every difficulty that besets our endeavors to please Him. He sympathizes because He knows all; He sympathizes because He has passed through it all. And if we are to abide in Him, we, too, must learn obedience.

And so, too, following upon that necessarily comes the measuring of the right and wrong of every action by the one question—Will this please my Lord and Saviour? The conscience is to be awake not merely to the particular rule of doing right and not doing wrong, but that particular rule itself is to be identified with and absorbed, as it were, in the hope of pleasing Him, Him the incarnate righteousness; whatever else may follow still to please Him. That is the aim of the man who abides in Christ. So literally to abide in Christ is to be full of frequent prayer to Him, and of frequent prayer to our heavenly Father that we may purify ourselves even as He is pure, that we may be more like unto Him. The great prize of the Christian's warfare is to be made like the Lord. This is the Christian life. This, as it were, gathers into one all that is taught us and all that is commanded us—to live in the memory of the love of Christ, to live in the hope of pleasing Him.

Let us turn to the other side, for the Lord adds to His precept that promise beyond all promises, “I in you.” He abides in us.

How does His presence within us manifest itself

even to ourselves? First, *in the growth of conscience*, in the education of that spiritual faculty which God has planted in every human soul by which we are able to appreciate that which is beautiful in spiritual things; that spiritual faculty which raises man above the level of the animals all round him, that spiritual faculty which marks us as citizens of a spiritual country. It is planted in every man's breast, but it needs the education and the growth which all other faculties need; and it is in the growth, in the power, in the clearness of the conscience that the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ will surely be seen. The man who abides in Christ while Christ abides in him will see the will of God more and more clearly as his service continues; he will see what the Lord is and what it is he is called to love when he is bidden to love the Lord; he will learn the beauty of the spiritual life, for the Lord Jesus will write it on his heart.

More and more shall he be able to appreciate God's truth, and to apply it to the conduct of his own life, and as he will thus find the Lord's presence in the expansion and the clearness of his conscience, so, too, will he find it *in the strengthening of his will*. The Lord will abide in him, and he will find himself stronger and stronger to put down temptations as they arise, to brush aside thoughts that trouble him, but do not really tempt him. As time goes on he will learn to hold himself fast against much that once disturbed him, that once shook his very soul. His will will become stronger to serve the Lord, his purpose will become more

fixed and resolute, and he will find that he gains by the Lord's own grace, and that he perpetually increases in that self-control which is needed for all the higher life.

And then what will be more to him yet, what will be to him a strong and perpetual happiness, is that he will find that by God's grace the warmth of *his love will kindle to more and more fervor, and more and more entirety of self-surrender.*

To love, and to know that you love God; what is it that makes a man really happy except it be that? The Lord is sure to give it. By the working of His Spirit He will draw the heart closer and closer; His love will awake our love, and the more we abide in Him and meditate on Him, and upon His marvelous self-sacrifice, the more shall we find kindling within our hearts that love which is, as it were, the seal of our Christian hope; that love which marks us for His own not only in His sight—for He sees even in our weak endeavors to obey Him the love that is already stirring within us—but it will be visible not only to Him, but to ourselves, trembling, and doubting, and hesitating whether we can claim that we really love the Lord with all our hearts. Yes, the Christian, by the abiding presence of Christ within him, moves slowly but surely on to that great consummation of all true Christian life.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Sixth Week—Friday—the Thirty-third Day of Lent.

The Life of Consecration.¹

“He saved others, Himself He cannot save.”—ST. MATT. xxvii. 42.

MANY a sarcasm enshrines the truth it was intended to deride. And so against themselves and their own will men are forced to speak the truth. The oath of the blasphemer becomes thus a witness for the existence of God; and in a thousand ways, when men have twisted and warped their speech into falsehood and wrong, the self-same formula is rescued to the highest purpose. On a colossal scale all this is verified in the drama of our Saviour’s Passion. Caiaphas unwittingly, and of course unwillingly, bears witness to the priesthood of Christ: Pilate and Herod to His kingship; and the angry, railing crowd in my text testify to two eternal truths which I will endeavor to expound in my brief meditations upon the life of consecration.

“He saved others.” We know what they meant by this taunt shot from the foot of the Cross. “Thou, O Nazarene, art an impostor. Either not at all, or, if at all, then by diabolic agency, Thou hast done Thy saving works. This is the test of

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. Dr. J. M. Danson, of Aberdeen, Scotland.

Thy verity—save Thyself. What boots it that Thou hast raised the dead or hushed the storm if Thou canst not save Thyself?" We sometimes wonder that no voice of protest was raised in that fell crowd against the terrible crime; that no woman, even, inspired by generous gratitude, cried aloud, "Hold! the man whom ye slay brought sunshine into my dwelling. Before He came to us my husband's soul was dark with doubt, his life sunk in degradation; but He gave him salvation, moral health; fixed his faith on the eternals; made the breezes of the Beulah land blow around him, until the moral nature began to recover and grow strong. He is now a pilgrim of light. Let others praise Him for despoiling the tomb of its prey, or for giving sight to the blind. My husband He has saved!" That no such protest came is another painful humiliation of our nature.

I need not tell you what is the real meaning of the confession, "He saved others," extorted from this crowd of mockers. By His Incarnation He saves the race; by His life He gives the saving example; by His death the saving blood; by His Holy Spirit a saving Church. Glory be to His Name. "He saved others."

But the truth is no less interesting and instructive, that "Himself He could not save." There are three classes of men who have never found it possible to save themselves, and these are the noble, the tender, and the brave.

The noble can never save himself. He is the god-like among men, and the life of God is the life of

gift. When God reigned in eternal solitude, He was all-sufficient in Himself to Himself, and yet He refused to continue without an object to love. This was the motive of Creation. The all-filling Subject craved for an object. Then began the work of turning nought into ought and chaos into cosmos. Angels were the first rational product of that all-forming Hand, and mark how they reflected the prime characteristic of their Maker. Their life, like His, is the life of giving and spending self for the benefit and saving of others, both in the things of time and eternity. The child in its slumbers ; the sailor on the stormy deep ; Lazarus in his passage from poverty to Paradise—each in turn is the object of the love and care of these beauteous self-sacrificing spirits. In the Supreme God and in the holy angels men behold the ideal life, the true nobility. Let us speak of men—noble men. A king never could ennable any one ; he only found a man noble and gave him a certificate accordingly. These were the men that “saved others,” and gave themselves. These are the kinsmen of all noble, useful natures, whether in the hierarchy, or the priesthood, or in the ranks of the laity who live for God and their fellow-men.

Neither can the tender one “save himself.” What is the glory of womanhood, especially of motherhood—of the maternity of blessed Mary as well as of every mother that listens to me to-day—but this, that love sweeps the heart of self, and makes joyful the service done for the helpless child through dark days and hopeless nights, when self will not,

cannot save itself? Or again what is it that makes her heart beat as she listens to the howling wind and raging sea which imperil the life of her sailor son, whose early waywardness has cost her many a pang? Or, once more, what is it that makes "the votaries of St. Clair" in every age forsake their dear old home, and go forth, with their lives in their hands, to tend the wounded on the battle-field or the fever-stricken crowds of our overgrown cities? You need not be told that it is the tenderness of their hearts. They *give*, and by giving save not themselves but others.

Neither can the brave man "save himself." It is his high priesthood to save others by the sacrifice of himself. Ease, time, fortune, blood, life, all except honor, are offered ungrudgingly upon the altar of fatherland when duty calls. This is the glory of the hero from the days of Homer to our own.

The "blood which is the life" is the brave man's last supreme sacrifice to the grandeur of duty. And yet courage is of two kinds—physical and moral. There is a great brute boldness, which, like Samson's, fears no foe, if the foe is in the shape of a tangible opponent, an opponent which sword or spear or rifle can lay low. Alas! that such a courage should at times be only physical and not moral. Sometimes the man who will march right up to the cannon's mouth dare not advance a new opinion, dare not join a minority in politics or religion, dare not "boldly rebuke vice" and "constantly speak the truth"—is routed, in fact, by satire or sarcasm

and public opinion. And yet moral courage is the highest in all the category of courage.

And now let us apply to our blessed Lord these three bars to self-saving—nobility, tenderness, and bravery, and at once it becomes obvious, in proportion to the unmeasurable degree in which He possesses them, how true the words must be of Him, “Himself He cannot save.” Noble! “Thou art fairer than the children of men, Son of God and Son of Mary.” Thy patent is not only “of earth’s best blood,” but has “titles manifold” in heaven itself. “The dew of Thy birth is of the womb of the morning” of eternity. Thy nobility binds Thee to deeds of self-sacrifice. Thou comest into the world to give, not to save Thyself. Thou art the Father’s Logos, His commissioned expositor of truths forgotten or neglected. But above all, the one only ransom for the sins of men. Tender! Thy sympathy was softer, sweeter, fuller than human breast contains. In Thee the best qualities of man and woman unite. In Thee there is specifically neither male nor female, bond nor free. For in Thee is the synthesis of the greatness of man and the sweetness of woman. Brave! Thou King of moral heroes, daring even unto death, the Martyr of saving truths which the world in its cruel blindness cast away from itself, and then madly slew their Author. That Thou wast physically brave Thy wounded body, “marred more than the sons of men,” bore witness. Likewise Thy unquailing eye before Pilate. But greater witness of Thy bravery we find in the moral courage which marked

Thy tranquil proclamation of startling truths :—“I am the Light of the world.” “When I am lifted up I will draw all men unto Me.”

But by a strange solution of the paradox, the grace and wisdom of God have so arranged it that *in the end the saviour of others does in very truth save himself*. In losing himself he saves himself, by “working out his own salvation with fear and trembling.” All saviours of others become incorporated in the one great central work of salvation whose theatre is Calvary. Not in vain does the Apostle call us “fellow-workers with God”; not merely rhetorical is the exclamation of the Psalmist, “I have said ye are gods; ye are all the children of the Most Highest”; or, to quote a Scottish poet, who has beautifully formulated the doctrine

“All through life we see a cross,
Where sons of God yield up their breath;
There is no gain except in loss,
There is no life except in death.”

XXXIV.

Sixth Week—Saturday—the Thirty-fourth Day of Lent.

Our Lord Weeping Over the Sins of Men.¹

“And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it.”—ST. LUKE xix. 41.

THERE are few things more pathetic or effective than tears. The tears of a child, or of a woman, always arouse our sympathy. A man’s tears are less frequently seen, not because less sensitive or sympathetic, but his nature is physically stronger. When, however, we see a man in tears, we know that there is some intensely serious cause. It is not pain, it is not a loss, however great, that will ordinarily wring tears from man’s stronger nature. It must be some great sorrow.

There are passages in Holy Scripture where we find strong men moved to tears. Thus we read of Esau’s tears, when he found that he had lost his blessing. We know how Jacob wept at the report of the death of his beloved son Joseph. Thus also David wept on the death of his dear friend, Jonathan, and once more St. Peter, we are told, wept remorseful tears because he had denied his Master.

But here in the text there is one greater than all. We do not hear of His weeping for Himself in His

¹ From a sermon by Rev. J. R. Baldwin, formerly Chaplain in India.

sorrows, not even for the pains of the cross, and the temporary loss of His Father's favor, much as He felt it. But the sorrows that would come upon the beautiful city of Jerusalem, the miseries that would befall the people in the coming siege, the thought of their sins, and their indifference to the offers of salvation, the thought of these things, to the prophetic mind of Jesus, as He looked over the city, glittering in the sunshine amid the olives and vines, caused Him to weep. Why did our Lord weep over Jerusalem ?

1. *Because He knew, as no one else could know, the real condition of that city.*

Remember it had received blessings and privileges vouchsafed to no other city, and to no other nation.

To it God sent special messengers, the prophets, to instruct and warn. To them the oracles of God, the sacred scriptures, were given. In their sight, daily, we might say hourly, was presented the most splendid representation of sublime worship this earth has ever seen, arranged by God Himself, type of the worship of the heavens, with its smoking sacrifices, its pleading incense, its enthusiastic offerings of praise, and its gorgeous symbolism, all reminding them of the heavenly temple.

But more, its hallowed courts had been trodden by the Son of God ; its multitudes fed, not merely by the bread of earth, but by the bread of life, and words spoken, golden words, had fallen from His lips, such as never man spake—words which have made the Gospel the storehouse of wisdom and goodness for the world, and enshrined the name of

Jesus all along the ages, as the best teacher of mankind.

And yet, and yet, Christ, who knew what was in man, when He looked upon that city, saw little or no result of His toil.

There was sin in high places. The sins of Greece and Rome had not failed to corrupt even the high priesthood itself, and the most respectable of the many sectaries of that day, are denounced as hypocrites and formalists. As were the leaders, so were the people, sunk in sin and indifference, unable to see the beauty of the Son of Man, and unable to accept His teaching.

As Christ considered this state of things, and knew that the people whom He loved would reject Him, and put Him to death, and that soon, very soon, Roman armies would besiege the beloved city, slay or make slaves of the inhabitants, the mind of Jesus, appalled by the cumulated agonies of that siege, and the destruction of the city, wept over it.

2. Another reason why our Lord wept over the guilty city was that *He knew the last warning had now been given.*

There is a limit to patience. God will not always strive with man. Recall some of the instances in Scripture which illustrate this fact.

Noah uttered his warnings, but the men of his day heeded him not. At length there came a last warning and the flood he predicted overwhelmed them.

Lot told his sons-in-law of the impending destruction of the guilty cities of the plain, but he seemed

to them as one who mocked. Well had it been if they sought escape from the woe that overcame Sodom and Gomorrah.

And now once again there is a last warning. A greater than Noah is here. More sure than the inspiration of angels is the knowledge of the Son of God. He warns the guilty city of its impending doom. They have a chance to repent and to escape, but they will not turn from their sinful ways. He sees the hardness of their hearts, and knows what is coming upon them.

The Friend of sinners weeps because He knows that it is the last warning they will have before the visitation of punishment for their sins.

3. Then again, Jesus wept because these citizens of Jerusalem, the doomed, *knew not the day of their visitation*. The day of visitation—this is no empty, unmeaning phrase. It is true of nations and individuals. There is a day of visitation for all. The laws of God cannot be broken with impunity. There come warnings and then the inevitable result—punishment according to the sin. The history of the world is full of alarming lessons that nations and cities cannot sin against righteousness and escape.

The Jews would not see the signs of the times, and their increasing sin and indifference culminated in the cruel murder of the Son of God. We are told these things were hid from their eyes, that is, they blinded their eyes, so that they could not see, and did not know what was befalling them till ruin fell upon them.

From this explanation of why our Lord wept over Jerusalem we may pass on to some of the lessons which are taught us.

1. As He wept because He knew the real condition of that city, so to-day we may think the Lord Jesus looking upon us sees the condition of our hearts. He knows whether those hearts are right with God, whether our religion is real or unreal. He can tell whether we are striving against our weaknesses and our sins, renouncing the temptations of the world from whatever source they may arise, and taking up our cross and living unto God by the grace of His Holy Spirit.

If we are serving the world instead of serving God, if we are following its evil ways instead of obeying God's commandments, He knows it. There is nothing hidden from Him. As He looks upon us to-day and sees our real condition, what does He find?

2. Then as He wept over Jerusalem because He knew the last warning had come to its guilty people —so now it may be that *He is looking upon some who are neglecting His mercy.*

God calls us to repentance. He has been most forbearing toward us all. He is not willing that any should perish. But the day of grace must have its ending, and then comes retribution. What else can come if any will not turn away from sin?

3. Finally as our Lord wept because He knew what the guilty people of Jerusalem must suffer, so now we are to remember that *the danger of impeni-*

tence must be very great or else so much had not been said to us in the way of warning.

In a certain sense every sermon preached, every sickness, sorrow, or bereavement, is a call to a better life.

Some are conscious of many warnings received, many opportunities missed, many good resolutions formed and broken.

Consider the privileges and blessings you have, the many times God's Holy Spirit has striven with you, and how often you have refused to hear. Beware of grieving that Holy Spirit further. Be not obstinate or rebellious. Drift not into a destruction not less terrible than that of the devoted city, whose people knew not the things belonging to their peace.

XXXV.

Holy Week—Monday—the Thirty-fifth Day of Lent.

Nothing but Leaves.¹

“And when He saw a fig-tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let there no fruit grow on thee henceforth forever. And presently the fig-tree withered away.”—ST. MATT. xxi. 19.

THIS incident thus described occurred on the Monday before the crucifixion—as we Christians should say, on Monday of the Holy Week. After His solemn entrance into Jerusalem on the previous day, our Lord retired to spend the night at Bethany, and He was returning to Jerusalem in the early morning of our Monday to continue the solemn work on which He had entered. There was a fig-tree near the road, covered before its time with leaves. Our Lord went up to it, says St. Mark, “if haply He might find some fruit on it, and He found nothing thereon but leaves only.” Upon this He pronounced a curse upon the tree,—“Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever:”—“no man eat fruit of thee hereafter forever.”

That Monday night when our Lord and the Apostles again passed the tree on their road back

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. H. P. Liddon, D. D., at one time Canon of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, England.

to Bethany it was already dark ; but as they were walking into Jerusalem on Tuesday morning, twenty-four hours after the occurrence, the disciples saw that the fig-tree had become dried up from the roots.

Now, let us try to consider, first, *the character of our Lord's act* on this occasion, and then, if we may, *its meaning*.

We have, then, before us, first of all and conspicuously, *an act of superhuman power*—an act by which Christ, our Lord, illustrated His empire over the natural and inanimate world. Our Lord uttered His word, and the fig-tree withered away. There is no other act in our Lord's earthly life which is exactly like this. It is in sharp and undeniable contrast to the general character of what He did.

The act before us is symbolical. It means a something beyond itself, of which it is the symbol. Such acts were common in ancient Israel. They were, in fact, part of the current language of the ancient East. In this case our Lord acted a parable, instead of speaking it. We may reverently suppose that He might have said, “A certain man beheld a fig-tree in the way with leaves upon it, and he came to it if haply he might find fruit upon it ; and when he found no fruit thereon but only leaves, he said unto it, let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever ; and presently that fig-tree withered away.” But, instead of saying this, He expressed it in action. He saw before Him an actual fig-tree with leaves. He went to it ; He noted that it had no

fruit ; and then He spoke, and at His word the fig-tree withered from the root. Action of this kind is of itself, and from the nature of the case, more vivid—more likely to command attention and to fix itself in memory—than language. We may be very sure that the disciples did not take their eyes off our Lord while He was thus engaged. His action was the more remarkable because He brought His miraculous power over nature directly into play, in order thus to illustrate the parable which He was acting, and to impress it more deeply on the minds of those who witnessed it than it could have been impressed by words.

Yes, our Lord's action was throughout symbolical. *What is the meaning*—the practical meaning—which lurks beneath, *behind the symbol*?

1. We cannot mistake the reference, first of all, to the Israel of our Lord's day. Israel here as often in His parables is in the foreground of His thought. Beyond all doubt, in the first place, for Him and His disciples, *this fig-tree was Israel*. This fig-tree was an apt figure of the pretentiousness, the self-satisfaction, the boastfulness of Israel. Israel had leaves enough—the boast in the law, in the Temple, in the appointed worship, in the ancient ceremonies, in the great doctors and schools of legal learning, in the mechanical and formal piety ; but fruit Israel had not. He found leaves in premature, in ostentatious, abundance ; and now the end was coming, and what took place on the Bethany road was an acted parable that shadowed it forth. When Israel shed the blood of the Blessed One, the

curse, self-invoked on the race, lighted upon it. The nation withered spiritually away. The words—the awful words—were fulfilled, “His blood be on us and on our children.” That ancient and glorious stock on which patriarchs and prophets and saints and heroes had grown for many a century, and whose crowning distinction it was that of it, as concerning the flesh, Christ came who is over all, God blessed forever—that honored tree was smitten henceforward with a Divine blast that dried up all the juices of its life and left it but a withered trunk, preserving only the outward form of its former self. Forthwith the fig-tree withered away.

2. But Israel is not the only subject of the parable. Our Lord’s words do not thus pass away. They are spoken for all nations and for all time. Behind Israel *we see nations, institutions, churches, causes, which promise more than they yield*—which attract by their leafage—which bear no fruit. When a civilization is constantly boasting of its progress, of its social improvements, of its adequate provision for the earthly happiness of man, while it is honeycombed with moral sores at which its eulogists dare not even hint—when an institution or a cause trusts rather to its advertisements about doing good than to its solid work—when a church is more active on platforms and in the press than in striving to promote the Christian faith and life in the souls of her people, one by one,—then we have before us the fig-tree on the road to Bethany, and the end cannot be far.

3. And behind institutions are separate souls—the souls which make up the institutions, and apart from which they are arid abstractions. You and I, my brethren, *may see in this acted parable a solemn word addressed to ourselves.* Now, as of old, Jesus, our Redeemer, hungers for spiritual fruit. As He thirsted for our salvation when He hung upon the cross, so He desires, with an eagerness which we can best express in the poor language of sense, something to show that there has been a true work of God in the soul—the fruits of the holy, indwelling Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance. This, surely, is a most invigorating and withal awful consideration—that there is a Being whom we do not see, whose eye is ever upon us, who knows all about us, who desires earnestly, constantly, moment by moment, that our separate lives should be productive. He comes to us—He comes sooner or later to each of us—as He came to the leafy and fruitless fig-tree on the road to Bethany. Others, even those who know us best—cannot come so near to us as He comes. Others see appearances; they do not penetrate to the realities. They see a respectable or religious bearing, regular and pious habits, works, which are, at least, in their form and effect, good works. So far, well. But He sees beyond these leaves, deeper and clearly, down into the centre of the soul. *What is the fruit which He would find there now?* Will He find a living faith, a strong hope, a warm love of God and of man, a true repentance for past sins, a desire to do God's

will simply and purely, and to let human judgments about us take of themselves? What would He find? Would He find only an interest in religious questions of the day—only a taste for Church music or Church architecture—only an aptitude for controversy—only a devotion to the literary aspects of Scripture—to its history, to its antiquities, to its poetry, to its language, to phrases; to practices, to habits which friends and usage and association prescribe; but nothing more, nothing deeper, nothing strictly internal to and inseparable from the soul, nothing that He would deem fruit and not mere leaves?

Let us be looking out for the visit which will, sooner or later, be paid by Him, our Lord, to us, that when He comes to us He may find through His own transforming and invigorating grace the realities, and not the mere semblance, of a life of service—not merely leaves but fruit.

XXXVI.

Holy Week—Tuesday—the Thirty-sixth day of Lent.

The Great Remedy.¹

“And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”—NUMBERS xxi. 9.

ABOUT three thousand years ago, the people of Israel were engaged in their long journey from the land of Egypt to the promised land of Canaan. That was a most eventful journey. God was plainly with them helping them through all their difficulties, leading them onward, and showing them daily mercies. And yet we find constant symptoms of the deepest ingratitude toward their heavenly Friend. We have a remarkable instance of this in the chapter before us, from which the text is taken. We read that “they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom; and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any

¹ From a sermon by the Rt. Rev. A. Oxenden, D. D., at one time Metropolitan Bishop of Canada.

water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." They were not content with the manna, which God so graciously sent them from heaven.

Now see how He punished them for their murmuring and unthankfulness. "And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died." This was an awful punishment and they felt they deserved it. What was to be done? They were dying by hundreds, and they knew of no remedy to save them. "Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people." Now observe God's answer. He does not remove those venomous serpents from among them; but He offers a remedy, if only they were ready to use it. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live."

How gracious was God in thus providing a remedy for His disobedient but still beloved people; a remedy just suited to their wants! There they lay, writhing with agony and exhausted with pain. The moment they were bitten they knew too well that no power of man could relieve them. Their case then seemed utterly hopeless. But now Moses is directed to make a Serpent of Brass, and to raise it upon a high pole, so that every dying man who turned his eyes that way, might see it. And who-

ever looked at this lifeless serpent was instantly healed.

Here then, we have a very interesting event in the history of God's people, Israel. But is there not something more in it? Have we not something here which speaks to us of a crucified Saviour? Turn to St. John iii. 14, and you will see.

There our Lord tells us that "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I think it will be interesting to us to trace out the likeness between the state of the Israelites and our state—between their remedy and ours.

FIRST, there is *some resemblance between their disease and ours*. We have seen that they were bitten by fiery serpents. There was a deadly poison. This probably brought on a burning fever in those who were bitten, and they died in the greatest agony. And is there not a deadly venom which poisons our nature? Sin is the poison which brings suffering and death. There is *spiritual death* among us. Souls are dying around us. Men are passing from this light-hearted, thoughtless world into misery and woe.

And is there no hope, then? Was there no hope for the Israelites? God provided a merciful remedy for them, and so He has for us.

Let us see, then, *SECONDLY, the resemblance between their remedy and ours*.

1. It was God Himself who devised this cure for the Israelites. Their disease was beyond the

skill of man. Physicians could do them no good. No medicine had power to relieve their agony. But God brought them help in their great misery. And so it has been with us. God looked upon us in our lost and ruined state. He pitied us in our helplessness, and devised the most glorious remedy for our salvation. Neither you, nor I, nor any man living could have escaped from this deadly disease, this misery into which sin had brought us, if God had not given His own Son to be our deliverer. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 10.)

2. Then there is another resemblance between their remedy and ours. The Brazen Serpent was in itself a very unlikely method of cure. One would have expected that God would have directed them to some plant which they might apply to their wounds; He might have pointed out some herb, the juice of which they were to drink; or He might have told Moses to speak the word and they would be healed. But no, He bids him simply to make a Serpent of Brass and to hold it up before them.

And what is the great Gospel Remedy? Is it not folly in the world's eyes? What did the Jews think of Christ? He was "despised and rejected" by them. There are numbers now, as there ever were, who from their very hearts despise the Cross. "The preaching of the Cross" (says the Apostle) "is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. i. 18.)

3. But let us look again, and we shall find another point of resemblance between the two remedies. You will observe that the remedy which cured the Israelites, was made in the same shape as that which wounded them. Fiery serpents had poisoned them, and a glittering brass serpent was to restore them.

And this reminds us that, although our blessed Lord was free from all taint of sin, yet He was made in “the likeness of sinful flesh.” St. Paul says that He was “made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. v. 21.)

4. Again, the Brazen Serpent was lifted up, and so was Christ. It was not enough that the Son of God should leave His throne in heaven and become a wanderer upon earth. It was not enough that He should lay aside His glory for a time, and take upon Himself the nature of suffering man. This would not have purged our sins. There was a debt to pay which His blood alone could wipe off. He must die. He must be lifted up upon the cross. These were His words as the time of His death drew near, “Now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world judged. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said signifying what death He should die.” (John xii. 31-33.)

What a wonder! The Lord of glory treated with shame! The Prince of life dying! He who created us, He who came to redeem us, yielding up His life that He might purchase for us that pardon

which we so little deserved, and yet so greatly needed !

By faith we look on Him who is unseen. By faith our souls rest on Him who is far out of sight. By faith we look on Him whom we “have pierced and mourn.” Our crucified Redeemer seems to say to each of us, “Look unto Me and be ye saved, for I am God, and none else, and beside me there is no Saviour.” Not an Israelite died who looked upon the brazen serpent ; and not one soul was ever disappointed that looked to Christ for everlasting life. He came to seek and to save “that which was lost.” His gracious language is, “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

XXXVII.

Holy Week—Wednesday—the Thirty-seventh Day of Lent.

The Solitude of Christ in Redemption.¹

“Oh, go not far from me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help me.”—PSALMS xxii. 11.

THIS is one of the cries of the ideal sufferer, of whose agonies, both of mind and body, we have so complete a picture in this twenty-second Psalm.

In this Psalm there is *one feature of our Lord's sufferings* upon which particular stress is laid: I mean His desolation or solitude. It is the keynote of the Psalm, the very first words of which complain, “My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” It finds expression again and again, nowhere, perhaps, more pathetically than in the cry, “Oh, go not far from me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help me.” Some centuries after David a figure passed before the soul of the greatest of the prophets, which shadowed out this aspect of a superhuman suffering, but from another point of view. It was the form of one coming as from Edom—coming along the wonted road of Israel's deliverance—coming with garments died in the vintage of Bozrah, emblems of a struggle which

¹ From a sermon by the Rev. H. P. Liddon, D. D., once Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral.

meant wounds and blood, glorious in His apparel—His moral apparel of righteousness and mercy—and traveling in the greatness of His strength. And when the seer gazed intently at this figure and asked who He was, the reply came, “I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” And when a further question was ventured—“Why art Thou red in Thine apparel, and Thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?” it was answered, as though this were of the very essence of the conflict, “I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none beside Me.” Yes, in His sufferings Jesus was alone—alone in spirit, though encompassed by a multitude. *In His passion He experienced a threefold solitude—the solitude of greatness, the solitude of sorrow, and the solitude of death.*

The loneliness of the great is one of the ironies of human life. The great are lonely because they are great—because, had they peers and companions they would cease to be what they are, at least in relation to those around them. This holds good of greatness in all its forms, whether greatness of station, or greatness of genius, or greatness of character.

Now our Lord in His passion was great in various ways. He was indeed, as it seemed to the eye of sense, a very scorn of men and the outcast of the people; and yet, as He said before Pilate, He was a king, and He felt, as no other can ever have felt, the isolation of royalty. His mental eye took in vaster horizons than were ever suspected to exist to any around Him. He had meat to eat that

knew not of. In this, as in so many other ways, He lived in a sphere of thought which was for them impossible. And, above all, in character He was not merely courageous, true, disinterested, loving, and all these in a degree which distanced the highest excellence around Him: He was also that which no other human form had been before, or has been since: He was sinless. And thus, as He went forth to die, He was in a moral, and an intellectual, and a social solitude—a solitude created by the very prerogatives of His being. His elevation above His fellows itself cut Him off from that sympathy which equals can most effectually give. And hence one motive of the prayer of His human soul in the Psalm, “Oh, go not far from Me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help Me.”

There is the solitude of greatness, my brethren, but *there is also the solitude of sorrow*. Certainly, sorrow is a link of human fellowship. Sooner or later all men suffer. “Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” No condition of life, no variety of temperament, can purchase exemption from the universal law of suffering. To some it comes as the chastening which is necessary to perfection; to others it comes as the penalty which is due to sin; but sooner or later, in whatever sense, it comes to all. And yet, though suffering is thus universal, no two human beings suffer exactly alike. There is the same individuality in the pain which each man suffers, that there is in his thought, in his character, in his countenance. No two men, since the world began, among the millions of sufferers,

have repeated exactly the same experience. And this is why human sympathy, even at its best, is never quite perfect. No one merely human being can put himself exactly by that act of the moral imagination which we call sympathy, in all the circumstances of another human being. Each sufferer, whether of bodily or of mental pain, pursues a separate path, encounters peculiar difficulties, shares a common burden, but is alone in his sorrow.

And especially was our Lord solitary in His awful sorrow. We may well believe that the delicate sensibilities of His bodily frame rendered Him liable to physical tortures such as ruder natures can never know. But we know this—that the mode of His death was exceptionally painful, and yet His bodily sufferings were less terrible, so it might seem, than the sufferings of His mind. His agony in the garden was of a character which distances altogether human woe. Our Lord advisedly laid Himself open to the dreadful visitation. He embraced it as by a deliberate act. He began to be sorrowful and very heavy. He took upon Him the burden and misery of human sin—the sins of all the centuries that had preceded and that would follow Him—that He might take it to the cross and expiate it in death. As the Apostle says, “He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” But the touch of this burden, which to you and to me is so familiar, was agony to Him. It drew from Him the bloody sweat which fell from His forehead on the turf of Gethsemane hours before they crowned Him with the thorns or nailed Him to the cross.

And lastly *there is the solitude of death.* Death, whenever it comes to any man, must be an act in which no other man can share. It strips from a man all that connects him with that which is without him. It is an act in which his consciousness, is, from the nature of the case, thrown back into itself and absorbed in that which is happening to itself. When the soul, by a wrench which no experience can possibly anticipate, breaks away from the bodily organism with which, since its creation, it has been so intimately linked, it enters upon a lonely path, which may indeed be brightened by the voices and the smiles of angels, but into which no human sympathy can follow.

In the death of our Lord Himself it might be supposed that this sense of solitude would be escaped. Living in hourly communion with the Father, surrounded by hosts of angel guardians, how, we may ask, could He taste of the solitude of death? Was not His human nature so united to His Divinity that even in death, the union was not forfeited? And how is this reconcilable with the supposition that He experienced the loneliness of dying as we men experience it? The answer is that our Lord by a deliberate act became obedient unto death. Whatever might have been the law of His being, as a sinless man united to a higher nature, He did not, if I may so dare to say, claim its privileges, but laid Himself open without reserve or stint to all the ills to which our flesh is heir, without at all escaping its lowest and its last humiliations. He selected as the mode of dying that which conspicuously in-

volved most pain and shame, and He would not, most assuredly, defeat His purpose by sparing Himself that accompaniment of death which causes so much apprehension to us sinful men—its solitariness. He might have prayed His father for twelve legions of angels, but He would not then be alone. He might have enjoyed unceasingly the joy, at least, of those who always behold the face of the Father in heaven. He willed to share the misery of the souls who cry in their last moments—some, we may be sure, every day that passes—“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” He submitted Himself to all these elements of our nature which sterner characters affect to scorn—to its sense of dependence—to its craving for sympathy—to its consciousness of weakness. “Oh, go not far from me, for trouble is hard at hand, and there is none to help me,” is the natural language of the feeblest sufferer; but it was the language also of our Divine Saviour, contemplating, with a true human apprehension, the loneliness of approaching death.

We see in the solitude of Jesus crucified a warrant of His constant sympathy with the dying. “In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.” Nothing that we may experience in His gracious providence—no anguish of soul—no weariness or torture of body—has been unexplored by Him who overcame all the sharpness of death, before He opened the kingdom of heaven to the great company of the faithful.

May He take pity upon us as sinful and erring,

yet believing children, and suffer us not at our last hour, for any pains of death, to fall from Him. May He look upon us with the eyes of His mercy, and give us comfort and sure confidence in Him, and defend us from the dangers of the enemy, and so bring us safely to our eternal home, for His own infinite merits.

XXXVIII.

Holy Week—Thursday—the Thirty-Eighth Day of Lent.

“The Night in which He was Betrayed.”¹

“When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world.”—ST. JOHN xiii. 1.

WE are not told how Jesus spent Wednesday, for the supper in the house at Bethany was on Tuesday evening. He apparently stayed in privacy, awaiting the coming day.

On Thursday morning the disciples, taking it for granted that He would celebrate the feast with them, came to Him early to receive instructions. No doubt the disciples expected that Bethany would be chosen, for He had solemnly turned away from Jerusalem two days before, and to go thither again would be to put Himself in the power of His enemies. But He had resolved to visit the city so dear to Him once more. It was the place appointed by the Law for the feast, and He would there be in the midst of the rejoicing multitudes, as Himself a son of Israel. He wished, also, to throw a greater sacredness over the institution He designed to inaugurate that night, as the equivalent, in the New Kingdom of God, of the Passover in the Old.

The Passover meal was now virtually finished,

¹ From the Rev. Dr. C. Geikie’s “Life and Words of Christ.”

when the warning had been given of the approaching denial of their Master by Peter, and the weak-minded desertion of the Eleven. The solemn words, foretelling the dangers and trials before them, had been added, when Jesus introduced by an act befitting a spiritual religion like His, in its simplicity, the institution which, henceforth, should supersede in His kingdom on earth the feast they had ended. Homage had been paid for the last time, as in farewell, to the Past : they were hereafter to honor the new Symbol of the Future.

He was about to leave them, and as yet they had no right, however simple, to form a centre round which they might permanently gather. Some emblem was needed by which they might, hereafter, be distinguished ; some common bond which should outwardly link them to each other and to their common Master. The Passover had been the symbol of the theocracy of the past, and had given the people of God an outward, ever-recurring remembrance of their relations to each other and to their invisible King. As the founder of the New Israel, Jesus would now institute a special rite for its members, in all ages and countries. The Old Covenant of God with the Jew had found its vivid embodiment in the yearly festivity He had that night, for the last time, observed. The New Covenant must, henceforth, have an outward embodiment also ; more spiritual as became it but equally vivid.

Nothing could have been more touching and beautiful in its simplicity than the symbol now introduced. The Third Cup was known as “the cup of blessing”

and had marked the close of the meal, held to do honor to the economy now passing away. The bread had been handed around with the words, "This is the bread of affliction :" and the flesh of the lamb had been distributed with the words, "This is the body of the Passover." The feast of the Ancient People of God having been honored by these striking utterances,—Jesus took one of the loaves or cakes before Him, and gave thanks, broke it, and handed it to the Apostles with words, the repetition almost exactly, of those they had heard a moment before—"Take, eat ; this is My body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me." Then, taking the cup, which had been filled for the fourth and last handing around, He gave thanks to God once more, and passed it to the circle with the words, "Drink ye all of it, for this cup is the New Covenant" presently to be made "in My blood" ; instead of the covenant made also in blood, by God, with your fathers. "It is," in abiding symbol, "My blood of the Covenant" ; of My Father, with the New Israel, "which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. This do, as often as ye drink, in remembrance of Me."

For Himself He declined to taste it. "I will not drink henceforth," said He, "of the fruit of the vine"—for it was still only wine—"till that day, when, at the end of all things, the kingdom of God, which I have founded, shall finally triumph, and My followers be gathered to the great heavenly feast. Then, I shall drink it new, with you and them."

Such, and so simple, was the new rite of the Spiritual Theocracy. To those around Him, at its institution, there could be no doubt of its meaning and nature, for it was, even in words, *a counterpart of that which He had superseded, with a purer and more spiritual form.* The cup, He told them, was a symbol of the New Covenant, under which, as His followers, they had come; in distinction from that which they had left for His sake. It was to be *a memorial of Him, and a constant recognition of their faith in the virtue of His atoning death*—that death, whose shed blood was the seal of this New Covenant between the subjects of His kingdom and God, His Father. It symbolized before all ages, to the New Israel, the cardinal virtue of His death. The Apostles could have had no simpler or more unmistakable intimation that as the blood of the Passover lamb redeemed the people of God, of old, from the sword of the angel of wrath, His blood would be a ransom for man from a far deadlier peril. A covenant to them implied a sacrifice, and His blood, as the New Covenant, was, therefore, sacrificial; the blood of a covenant which pledged His followers to faith and duty; the blood of a new paschal lamb with which His disciples must, in figure, be sprinkled, that the destroying angel might pass over them in the day of judgment.

The custom of the nation to make a common meal the special occasion of religious fellowship, made the new institution easy and natural to the Apostles, and the constant use of symbols in their

hereditary religion prevented their misconceiving the meaning of those now introduced for the first time. They saw in it an abiding memorial of their Lord: a vivid enforcement of their dependence on the merits of His death, as a sacrifice for their salvation: the need of intimate spiritual communion with Him, as the bread of life: and the bond of the new brotherhood He had established. The joint commemoration of His broken body and shed blood was, henceforth, to distinguish the assemblies of His followers from the world at large. Excepting baptism, it was the one outward form in the Society, established by their Master.

It was late in the night of Thursday when Jesus had ended His last discourse and farewell prayer. According to the immemorial custom of the nation to mingle songs of praise to God with their feasts, the little band had already sung the first two of the six Psalms—the one hundred and thirteenth to the one hundred and eighteenth—which formed the great Hallelujah of the Passover and all other feasts. The stillness of the night had been broken by the sound at the time when the second cup had been poured out. Now, at the close, the voices of the eldest of them chanted, with slow, solemn strains, the remainder of the Hallelujah—the rest responding with the word, Hallelujah, at the close of each verse. The anthem began fitly—“Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth’s sake,” and closed with the words of the one hundred and eighteenth Psalm—“Blessed be he that cometh in the name of

Jehovah ;” the Apostles responding—“ In the name of Jehovah, Hallelujah ! ” And now, all was over, and the Eleven, following their Master, went out into the night. They were on their way to Gethsemane.

He was to give His life a ransom for man : to be made an offering for sin, though He knew none : to be repaid for infinite love and goodness by ignominy and shame. Perfect innocence freely yielding itself to misconception and death, for the unworthy and vile, would be transcendent even in a man, but in the Son of God ! Who can tell what it was to have left the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens to stoop to Calvary !—for Him who could raise the dead to descend to the tomb !

XXXIX.

Holy Week—Good Friday—the Thirty-ninth Day of Lent.

The Cross the Key of Life.¹

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God.”—I PETER iii. 18.

WE to-day commemorate the world’s supreme tragedy. Let me ask you to see in the Cross of Christ the key of human life, and observe how it admits us to a solution of certain dark mysteries of existence.

In the first place, it shows us *the Perfect Man crucified*—“Christ hath also suffered . . . the Just.” You may ask me why trouble has come upon you. You are confident you are no worse than your neighbor. Why should your hopes have been so mocked, your dreams end in so rude an awakening? Why should your means have been swept from you, or health be denied you, or the light of your eyes taken away? What have you done to be doomed to such disappointment and failure, to perpetual poverty, or infirmity and pain, or grief and desolation? Such questions I may not be able to answer. But I can point you to the fact that the very best man that ever lived on earth

¹ From “The Key of Life” Meditations by the Rt. Rev. C. B. Brewster, D. D., Bishop of Connecticut.

—the Perfect Man, the Sinless One, who had no consciousness of sin, who in Himself knew no sin and was in character separate from sinners—that He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; that He was despised and rejected; that He suffered cruel things; that upon Him, who had done nothing amiss, but contrariwise lived a life of blessedness and blessing, came the excruciating torments, the unspeakable shame, the untold agony of the Cross.

2. Not only did the Perfect Man suffer, but *only so could He accomplish His great work and attain the consummation wherefore He came*, He became perfect through sufferings. “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” It behooved Him to suffer these things, and so to enter into His glory. Thus the Cross yields an explanation of life. It is the solution of some of its most baffling perplexities, a key to open to the light some of its darkest and most appalling chambers. It reveals that law of life—perfect through sufferings. What illumination it casts on the spectacle of the world, making its contemplation a different sight! What a revolution it has wrought in living, making it a different thing to suffer the manifold ills that flesh is heir to! This King, wearing a crown of thorns, marching with royal tread the way of Sorrow, and choosing for His throne a cross, transmutes pain, transfigures anguish, and consecrates sorrow forever. The ignominious instrument of infamy, the gibbet of that day, is to-day signed on the brow of

God's children, and lifted aloft on heavenward spires. It has become the cherished symbol of discipline to noblest uses, of culture for destined glory. It brings its message, which is a gospel, to the soul called to bear much, that it may be much; the branch sharply pruned that it may bring forth more fruit; the chosen image hewn and chiselled to the desired beauty.

3. Again the Cross *reveals a far-reaching and uplifting law of the universe—the law of sacrifice.* That sacrifice of Christ, that sublime losing of His life, illustrates and glorifies with its illumination how much of the sufferings of mankind borne for others! The mother for her child, the nurse or physician for the patient, the brave fireman for the imperiled community, the soldier for his country, the martyr for the Church—these all, sacrificing self for others, receive a new glory from the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and its great sacrifice. Thence streams a radiant light for many a darkened chamber, many a couch of suffering or habitation of sorrow. Every one who is called to endure, whether it be disciple set apart to the bearing of much pain, or grief-stricken soul in the midst of sore affliction, or hero “i’ the imminent deadly breach,” or martyr at the stake, each may enter into the inspiration of Christ’s sacrifice.

4. *There is in the world’s great tragedy a further revelation.* What was its cause? What is working through all the piteous story? What was it inspiring the base traitor seeking to betray the Master, the priests and Pharisees plotting His ruin, the

mutual foes confederate against Him, the mocking Herod, the vacillating governor, the weak friend denying Him, the brutal soldiery, the cruel tiger of the mob thirsting and roaring for His blood? What wrought against Him but that baseness in human blood, that perversion of human will, that disloyalty to conscience, that malignant and desperate derangement of humanity, that something which separates men from and arrays them against good, that something which puts self in place of God, that something inexplicable yet undeniable which we call sin? *From the Cross we may learn lessons about the principle, the inner nature, the essential wickedness, the sinfulness of sin.* Here is the sinless One, and sin murders Him; the sinless One, and He “suffered for sins”; the Son of God, incarnate righteousness, and the forces of evil cry, “Away with Him! Crucify Him!” Thus is the Cross of the Son of God a measure, better than any other measure, of that wickedness wherein the whole world lieth, and which demanded such a sacrifice.

4. Looking more deeply, *we see in the Cross the revelation of Divine love coping with the world's evil.* God so loved the world that He has not withheld His Son, His only Son. We see Divine love undergoing the transcendent sacrifice. We see Divine love suffering with men—yes, suffering for men. We see Divine righteousness dying the death of sin. Thus the Cross explains God. God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. We see revealed, behind all, a Father sending His

Son to die, that we might receive the adoption of sons. If the Cross was the measure of the world's iniquity, it is also the measure of the length and breadth and depth and height of the Divine love that passeth knowledge. If it revealed the sinfulness of sin, it reveals also Divine redemption from sin. It proclaims Divine love conquering sin by sacrifice for sinners. It proclaims pardon for sin and cleansing from sin. It releases from sin in order to reconcile to God. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, in order that nothing might separate us from God. He "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"—to God, the transcendent mystery, but also the supreme reality; life's source and centre and goal, to whom we owe all, and in whom we find all, that gives worth to life.

Thus is the Cross the key of life. It solves the great enigma, the riddle of the painful earth. It admits to those profound laws underlying the world's suffering—discipline through pain, furtherance thereof by coöperation of one's own will, fellowship in suffering, sacrifice for others, death through sin, Divine love redeeming from sin, man's privilege by sacrificial service to draw nigh to God.

Who can behold the Cross of Christ and not be touched, and touched to finer issues? Look to the Cross of Christ. See the light that thence traverses human life, that shines upon your life! It may seem all dark before you; life may seem dull and

empty, meaningless, hopeless, wretched, desperate, even a horror of great darkness. Come! Follow on the King's highway of the holy Cross, and you shall find it a way to make life intelligible and durable, so that you may mourn but will not murmur, suffer but not repine, grieve but not rebel, be tried and tempted but not sin.

The Cross is the key of life. It solves life's mysteries. It admits us to life's inner meaning. Reconciled to existence, we begin to enter into its true joy. We are redeemed to God from selfishness and sin. We are won to the Divine love and holiness. We are reconciled to God, and made at one with Him.

XL.

Holy Week—Saturday—the Fortieth Day of Lent.

In Paradise.¹

“To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”—ST. LUKE xxiii. 43.

THE dying thief on the cross prayed to our Lord to remember him when He came into His Kingdom. The prompt reply was a promise that the penitent one should that day be with Him in Paradise.

What and where is this Paradise of which Jesus speaks? We cannot definitely say what it is or where it is. No distinct revelation of it has been made; and it is only by some slight hints and symbols, that we learn anything concerning it. The Persian word *Ferradis*, from which our word “Paradise” is borrowed, means simply a pleasure-garden, a place of physical rest and enjoyment, surrounded by all that can minister pleasure to the mind or body. Hence the word has come to mean a place of supreme felicity, unalloyed by pain or sin. The word is used only three times in the New Testament,—once in connection with the thief on the cross; once by St. Paul, where he tells the Corinthians that he was “caught up into Paradise”; and once by St. John, where he speaks of the tree

¹ From a sermon by the Rt. Rev. William Bacon Stevens, D. D., formerly Bishop of Pennsylvania.

of life, "which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." In the Septuagint the word "Eden" is rendered "Paradise" and hence it has ever been used to express the abode of Adam and Eve in a state of innocence and bliss. Milton has emphasized this word in his immortal poems of "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained," lifting it up far above the Elysium of the Romans, or the Hesperides of the Greeks, the trees of which bore golden fruit. All the Scripture teaches us is simply this: that God has established it, hence called "the Paradise of God"; that it has in it "the tree of life," and hence must be a place of living souls; a human being has been taken up to it, and returned to earth, but He could not say, "whether in the body or out of the body," and has not given us one syllable of information as to what or where the place is; that Jesus Himself went directly from earth to Paradise; that He was soon joined there by the dying thief; and that, according to our Lord's answer to the prayer of the thief, it is a part of Christ's kingdom. These are all the facts that we know about Paradise, and from them we are, I think, warranted in saying that the *Paradise into which Jesus went is the place where, immediately after death, the souls of the righteous, "after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh," go, and where they are at rest.* It is the waiting-place of the disembodied spirits of the just, until they shall "be clothed upon" by their resurrection-body. It is not a state of sleeping unconsciousness, as some suppose, but of pure conscious enjoyment, free from all taint of sorrow

or of sin. We do, indeed, speak of sleeping in Jesus, and our graveyards are called cemeteries (*i. e.*, sleeping-places) but the terms were only used to convey the idea that the dead were unconscious as to the things of this life, as those who sleep soundly are unconscious of their surroundings. To the living, the dead are as asleep. They hear us not, speak not to us, walk not with us; but the dead themselves are not asleep as to their own consciousness. Unclogged by the fetters of time and earth and sense, their souls have a wakefulness never before felt, and never to slumber again. Their spiritual activity now for the first time finds its full energy and power, and every instinct of the soul is quickened into newness of life.

Paradise, then, is the place where the souls of the righteous dead are assembled till they are rehabilitated with their spiritual bodies at the resurrection.

But in what does the happiness of this Paradise consist? Ah, in the precious words, “present with the Lord,” lies the whole happiness of Paradise!

Well may St. Paul say, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” than to tarry in the flesh. Yes, to be “with Christ,” that is supreme felicity. It is not the mere rest after toil, it is not the mere absence of temptation and sin, it is not the exemption from pain and woe and tears, it is not the possession of purer and higher faculties of mind and soul, it is not the splendor and glory of the future heavenly habitations, it is not the companionship of angels and archangels, it is not the celestial music such as the

blessed only can make, it is not its perpetual brightness and its unceasing worship, it is not either or all of these combined which make the true bliss of the redeemed.

But that which overtops all, that which is better than all, that which more than all else will fill and satisfy the soul, is to be with Christ.

The simple difference between Paradise and Heaven, which are two distinct states and conditions, is this: In Paradise the soul exists as a pure, spiritual, incorporeal essence. Possessing its full powers, and exercising its powers as far as its condition permits, full of conscious life, full of perfect bliss, fixed in moral character as to its future existence, but waiting to be “clothed upon,” as the apostle expresses it, with our house (or tabernacle or abiding-place), “which is from heaven”; complete as to all moral and spiritual qualities and powers, but yet lacking the presence of the resurrection-body, that incorruptible, that glorious, that spiritual body, fashioned like unto Jesus’ own resurrection-body, with which the disembodied spirits in Paradise will be invested, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then, the soul, clad in its spiritual body, over which sin and death can have no power, will have, not new powers, but new instruments for the display of its powers; new organs of spiritual existence and enjoyment; new methods of intercourse with its heavenly surroundings; new avenues of communion with angels and archangels; and thus, through its celestial body, be put in full accord and correspond-

ence with all its heavenly environment, from the simplest pleasure that gladdens the redeemed soul to the loftiest display of God's glory when He unveils Himself to His glorified saints, as they worship before His celestial throne.

The idea of a Paradise beyond the grave is one of the most poetical and attractive to the human mind. Our churches resound with the rhythmic song,—

“O Paradise ! O Paradise !
Who doth not crave for rest ?
Who would not seek the happy land,
Where they that loved are blessed ? ”

But do you sing it in truth ? Do you really crave for the “rest that remaineth for the people of God” ? Do you truly seek the happy land where Jesus is ? Do you long to stand in the light with loyal hearts and true ? Then are you of course looking to Christ as the way, the truth, the life, and light of men ? Do this, and you shall live.

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